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NEWMAN'S LIVES OF THE ENGLISH SAINTS

VOL. IV.

MANSUETI HÆREDITABUNT TERRAM
ET DELECTABUNTUR
IN MULTITUDINE PACIS



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Priest of the Order of Charity.
Exeter College. Oxford. B.A. 1842.

THE LIVES OF THE ENGLISH SAINTS

WRITTEN BY VARIOUS HANDS AT THE SUGGESTION OF

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

AFTERWARDS CARDINAL

IN SIX VOLUMES

VOLUME FOUR

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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LIFE OF

ST. GILBERT

PRIOR OF SEMPRINGHAM, CIRC. A.D. 1085–1189

ADVERTISEMENT

THE substance of the following pages is taken from the life of St. Gilbert, published in the recent Edition of Dugdale's Monasticon, from a manuscript in the British Museum. The name of the author is unknown; it appears however incidentally that he was of the order of Sempringham, and knew St. Gilbert personally in his last days. Portions of the life have been put together from contemporary sources, as, for instance, the well-known story of the nuns of Watton, taken from St. Aelred's narrative published in Twysden's Collection. On that story itself it may be well to say a few words. The time is now past when it was necessary to prove that monasteries were not nests of wickedness. Indeed it is high time that it should be so, for to any one who looks into the evidence for such an assertion, it is wonderful that it should ever have been made. The case is made out simply by raking together all the isolated facts related by historians from the fourth century to the Reformation, and bringing them to bear against monastic institutions without distinction of order, age, or country. In one popular book, for instance, the customs of Catholic monks and Manichæan heretics, of monks in their first fervour, and of Orders

in a relaxed state, are put side by side. There we may learn that monks were in the habit of fasting on Sundays, of neglecting the fasts of the Church, and of abstaining from meat, because the Creation was evil;[1] and all this because the Council of Gangra condemned certain heretics for such malpractices. What would be said if the same sort of evidence was applied to any other history? No one denies that at some periods monasteries required reform, that is, that in the intervals of their long services, monks conversed together instead of keeping silence and employing themselves in manual labour; nay, that in process of time, and in some monasteries, instances of flagrant wickedness might be found. But the unfairness of heaping all instances together, without attempting to classify or arrange them historically, will be evident to any one who thinks at all seriously on the subject. And indeed so materially have old prejudices been weakened within the last few years, that few persons will be found who consider such stories, as the one above mentioned, to be really specimens of the age in which they occurred. Still, however, as they ever leave vague and indefinite suspicions upon the mind, it may be well to quote the opinion of the very work to which we have alluded as especially unfair to the monastic orders. In Fosbroke's British Monachism, the following passage occurs: "It is singular that notwithstanding the story of the poor nun in Alfred of Revesby and Bale, Nigel Wireker says

[1] Fosbroke, British Monachism, ch. 2, p. 11.

nothing of this Order but what observation of the rule implies; but it was yet young when he wrote."[1] This Nigel was a satirist, who details in verse the faults of the monastic orders of his day. Cave makes him to have flourished about the year 1200, full eighty years after the first institution of the Nuns of Sempringham.

It only remains to add that in writing the following pages, use has been made of a manuscript life of St. Gilbert, kindly lent by its author, William Lockhart, Esq., now a brother of the Institute of Charity established at Loughborough.

[1] Fosbroke, British Monachism, ch. 6, p. 78.

LIFE OF

ST. GILBERT

PRIOR OF SEMPRINGHAM, CIRC. A.D. 1085–1189

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It was a sad and dreary time for England when first Norman William mounted the throne which he inherited from the blameless Edward. The nobles were wandering about among the woods and forests of the land, and living like robbers among the impassable marshes of the country; while Edgar, England's darling, was an exile in Scotland.[1] Her pleasant homes were turned into military fastnesses, for each man fortified his dwelling; and as he closed door and window at night, the head of the family said Benedicite, and the household responded Dominus, not knowing whether their homestead might not be burned over their heads at night.[2] Who can tell the horrors inflicted on those of English blood by Odo, the Bishop of

[1] Matt. Paris, p. 1001.

[2] Ibid. p. 999.

Bayeux, and William Fitz-Osborne?[1] Noble English virgins and matrons were the victims of the brutal Norman soldiers; monasteries were stripped of their lands, and many a Saxon expelled from his possessions to make room for a foreigner.[2] Geoffrey, the mail-clad Bishop of Coutances, alone had 280 manors for his share of the spoil.[3] A love of hunting seems to be the darling sin of our Norman monarchs, and to this William sacrificed whole villages, with their churches and inhabitants. He had a summary way of increasing his forest-lands; no need of planting trees, or waiting for the slow growth of oaks and beeches. There were then many woods in merry England, and he simply swept away the homes of the villagers who dwelt amongst and near them, so that the lands returned to their natural state of wilderness, and the stag couched undisturbed on the hearth of the peasants or in the long fern where once was the altar of the village church. But the greatest blot on William's fair fame is the terrible depopulation of the north of England. In the depth of winter the Conqueror went forth to his fearful revenge; he stalked on boldly over mountains covered with snow and frozen rivers; the horses dropped down dead with fatigue under his knights, but still he pressed on. The aged Archbishop of York died of grief at the approach of these miseries, and the Bishop of Durham with the relics of St. Cuthbert fled before him. Behind him was famine and pestilence, and a hundred thousand men are said to have

[1] Oderic, 507–523.
[2] Ibid. 523. [3] Ibid. 523.

perished. He left not a village standing between York and Durham.[1]

And yet, relentless and ambitious as he was, Norman William was one of the best monarchs of his age and race. If he was stern, it was with a calm and majestic sternness, very different from the bestial fury of his son the Red King. On his death-bed he declared that it was on principle that he had put in prison innocent men, because they were dangerous.[2] In the beginning of his reign England had a prospect of peace, when he went back to Normandy and displayed to his noble visitors the beauty of the long-haired sons of England and its gold-tipped drinking horns, and congratulated himself on his easy conquest. His policy in the first years of his reign tended to effect a quiet and gradual amalgamation of the Norman and Saxon races. He married Saxon maidens to his nobles, and though he gave the lands of Englishmen to his followers, yet on the other hand he transplanted Englishmen to the Continent and endowed them with Norman fiefs. His administration of the law, though stern, was rigidly just, and it was said that a girl laden with gold might pass through England unharmed. He did not oppress the poor; it was rather the noble who felt his iron yoke, and probably the Saxon serf was not worse off under his Norman lord than under the Saxon Thane. The Englishmen had already begun to clip their long hair and to adopt Norman fashions, when the rising under Earl Morcar took

[1] Simeon, Dunelm. in ann. 1069.
Oderic, 660. William of Poictiers, 211.

place, and the beautiful and generous Edwin treacherously perished, to the universal grief of England. The Conqueror shed some tears over him, but from that moment he seems to have been convinced that a gentle hand could not rule England, and his inexorable policy began. Again, it should not be forgotten that in his exercise of Church patronage, he was free from simony, the besetting sin of his successors. He seems to have had a quick perception of character; and, with the same acuteness by which on his death he foretold that his wily Henry would outstrip his brethren, he fixed upon great Churchmen to rule the English Sees. It was perhaps fortunate for the Conqueror that his interest coincided with his duty, but it is true that the English Church was very much improved by the Conquest. It may be that he was desirous of weakening the native courts, and breaking up the old organisation which kept up an English feeling;[1] but however this be, he certainly gave a great boon to the Church when he restored her internal jurisdiction instead of subjecting her to the civil tribunal of the Hundred courts. Whatever motives influenced him to remove the Saxon Abbots from Saxon monasteries, it is certain that generally religious houses flourished under the Norman successors whom he appointed. The Saxon clergy were too often in a state of rude ignorance and jovial indulgence. The great Abbey of Abingdon was well rid of its abbot, Sparhafoc, the cunning craftsman, who absconded with the

[1] Wilkins's Concilia, i. 368.

gold with which he had been entrusted to make a new crown for the Confessor.[1] A general reform took place throughout England on the model of St. Albans, which became a school of holy discipline under Paul its first Norman abbot. The poor monks may have grumbled at his uncouth Norman fish-pie,[2] which he introduced into the infirmary instead of the savoury meat, which was too apt to invite the brethren to put themselves on the sick list; but they could not help acknowledging the vast advancement of religion under his rule. The fine old Saxon character was everywhere greatly impaired, and nowhere more so than in the Church; a set of hunting and hawking abbots, men who loved hippocras and mead, sat in the seat of the ancient saints of the land. On the whole, Abbot Paul may not have been far wrong when he looked down on his predecessors, though of the noblest blood in England, as somewhat thick-witted and ignorant. An intellectual and active element was introduced into the English Church which it had not before; and though the Saxon historian declares that England took no part in the dispute between Pope and Antipope, yet William, by his appointment of Lanfranc, prepared the way for breaking down the mischievous nationality which, even more than our tossing sea, was beginning to cut us off from the rest of Christendom.[3]

All these, however, are but the bright parts in a

[1] Palgrave's Anglo-Saxon Constitution, p. 175.
[2] Matt. Paris, vit. Abb. St. Alb. [3] Ibid. ubi sup.

dark picture; the sins of Saxon England were to be punished, and tremendous was the amount of physical suffering which the poor country had to endure. The fusion between the rival races could only be effected by a red-hot furnace of suffering. Such was the hatred which existed between them, that even the ties of religion failed at first to bind them together. When, for instance, a Norman abbot came with his Norman chants to Glastonbury, the monks rebelled, and declared that they would not change their beloved Gregorian tones; then Abbot Turstin introduced an armed band into the church, and two monks were slain, one at the very altar, the other at its foot. The monks defended themselves as they best could with the forms and candlesticks of the choir. At last the monk's frock got the better of the coat of mail, and the soldiers were driven out, but not till the church had been stained with blood, and the crucifixes and images of the Saints transfixed with arrows.[1] In St. Albans, too, Abbot Frederic was the head of the Saxon interest in the south of England, and the two hostile parties lasted in the abbey through the time of the next abbot up to the election of his successor. If these quarrels raged in the sanctuary itself, it is easy to imagine that the world without was not in a state of peace.[2] There was again another cause which increased the sufferings of poor England, as well under the reign of the Conqueror as of his successors; and this was the quarrel of the Norman barons with their kings.

[1] Simeon, Dunelm. in ann. 1082.
[2] Matt. Paris, vitæ Abb. St. Alb., p. 1005.

In France feudalism was much more systematised than in England. William, when in Normandy, was but the head of a feudal state, the first among his peers.[1] He asked leave of his barons before he invaded England, and when the field of Hastings had been won, and William fairly seated on his throne, the Norman nobles began to think that their work was done, and returned home to their manors in Normandy. William saw that he could not count on a feudal army, and henceforth employed mercenaries.[2] When his authority was strengthened in England he was much more absolute across the Channel than on the Continent. He held his English crown by a very different tenure from that by which he wore his ducal coronet in Normandy. There he was a feudal baron of the King of France, but England he held by right of conquest; and this told even more on his own followers than on the English. To the Saxons he was the representative of Edward the Confessor, whose laws he had sworn to observe, but the Normans who followed him to England, when once on English soil, lost their Norman, without distinctly acquiring Saxon rights. Hence the feudal system was at first much less defined in England than in France; and hence the bloody wars which the English kings had to wage against their nobles. Bitterly do the barons complain of the Red King at Henry's accession, and fairly does the monarch promise improvement; but the wily Beauclerc only waits his time till he feels his throne

[1] Oderic, 493. [2] Ibid. 512.

firm beneath him. It is true that these quarrels made the English necessary to their Norman monarchs; loyally did they serve the Conqueror on the Continent, and Normandy saw her fair fields ravaged by her own Duke, leading a Saxon army. Again his son William owed his throne to his Saxon subjects, who, by the persuasion of their Archbishop Lanfranc, assisted him against his disaffected barons. Ultimately the English gained by it, but during this period of transition they were miserably ground down between the opposing parties. Neither king nor baron cared much for the poor Saxon, and Magna Charta has much more about baronial than about popular rights.

Alas for England in this dreadful time! All countries have had their day of probation, but few have passed through such a fiery trial as our own. Scarcely had England recovered from the Dane, when the Norman came, and Dane-land, March-land, and Saxon-land, with the remnants of the old Cymri, in Cambria, all alike felt his yoke; and if it was an iron yoke under the Conqueror, what was it under his successors? The Conqueror had a rough justice of his own, his long arm reached from one end of England to the other, and he knew every hide of land within it; he even several times endeavoured to learn the language of his new subjects, that he might judge their complaints himself, and would have done so, if he had not been too old to begin grammar anew.[1] But under the reign of his foul successor, "riot was the rule" of England.

[1] Oderic, 520.

He was a man almost ludicrous in his knavish wickedness, who blasphemed and robbed with a jest, and grinned over his captive when he had him in his power.[1] He introduced into England a class of men even worse than the robber-soldier; his companions were effeminate youths, stained with terrible crimes; and far worse were they in their silken robes and long hair parted in the middle, like that of women, and their feet clad in peaked shoes of fantastic shape, than the lawless soldier, with his conical cap of iron, and his corslet of steel rings, albeit he ruthlessly wasted the stock of the husbandman. The foul lust of this man cried aloud to heaven for vengeance, and before he fell like a beast of the field, in the New Forest, men felt a strange presentiment that the wrath of God was coming upon him, and holy monks, even in their dreams, prayed to our Lord: O Lord Jesus Christ, Saviour of mankind, for whom Thou hast shed Thy precious blood on the Cross, look in mercy upon Thy people, groaning in misery under the yoke of William.

Our Blessed Lord, however, did not leave His people without consolation in this dreadful time; the Church was still up in arms against the world; though a contest was going on in her own bosom, and such a man as Ralph Flambard sat on the throne of Durham, yet she had inexhaustible resources in the Saints whom the Lord raised up within her. St. Anselm was a match for the Red King, with all his satellites, whether soldiers or prelates. Even his

[1] Will. Malmes. Gesta Reg., lib. 4.

father, inflexible as he was, was foiled by the crosier of St. Wulstan ; and the simple monk, Guitmund, refused to hold either bishopric or abbacy in England, bidding the king beware lest the fate of unjust conquerors should await him ; and so he left him, and went back across the sea to his quiet monastery of St. Leuffroy of the Cross, in Normandy, a monk as poor as he came. So also, at the time when foul and lawless wickedness was raging in England, under William Rufus, the Lord was nurturing in secret in His Church a man to whose angelic purity it was afterwards given to create the only wholly English Order, one destined to provide a refuge for holy virgins from the snares of the world ; and it is the life of this man that, by God's blessing, we hope now to show truthfully to the reader.

Gilbert in the Schools

It was about the close of the reign of our first William that Gilbert was born, though the exact year is not known.[1] His father, Sir Joceline, was a Norman knight, and a good soldier, whose services had been rewarded by many gifts of land in Lincolnshire, and especially with the lordship of Sempringham in that county. He was probably one of the vavassors, or inferior nobility of the realm.[2] His

[1] He was above a hundred years old when he died, in 1189.

[2] The Bollandists have conjectured that Gilbert was connected with Gilbert de Gant, a great baron who came over with William the Conqueror, whose wife's cousin he was. They, however, have no reason to give for their opinion, except that he was called Gilbert, and that the family of Ghent, or Gant, held the barony of Folkingham, near Sempringham. It will afterwards appear, that Joceline

mother was a Saxon lady, the daughter of a Thane, and of the same rank as her husband. He is thus an early instance of the blending of Norman and Saxon blood, and though, as will be seen by-and-by, his character partook more of the homeliness of his mother's race, yet certain adventurous journeyings on the Continent showed that he had also some of the spirit of his kinsmen, who went forth from home to gain England, the south of Italy, and Sicily. But little is known of his parents, and they soon disappear from the history, so that they most probably died before he had attained the age of manhood. All that appears from his chronicler is, that they lived on their estate, "in the midst of their people." A little before his birth, it is said that his mother dreamt that the moon had come down from the sky, to rest upon her bosom; and his fanciful disciple sees in it a presage that his childhood, pale, wan, and sickly as the crescent of the new moon, was destined by the grace of the Sun of righteousness to expand into a full orb of brightness. At all events it is certain that, as a child, he was no favourite with those about him. His recollections of childhood, as he used afterwards, in extreme old age, to tell his canons, were very painful. He was puny, plain, and shy; his

was not a tenant *in capite*, and therefore not one of the great nobility of the realm, and that he held the lands of Sempringham of this very Gilbert. He is here called *miles*, and not *comes*, and it is observable that in one place, the Latin life of Gilbert in Dugdale, says, that Gilbert was "*de plebe electus.*"—Vit. S. Gil. ap. Mon. Angl., vol. vi. pp. 2, 14. The Conqueror was not by any means particular as to the nobility of the men whom he employed, nor, indeed, were his successors, as his son Henry, who is said to have been fond of low company.

father saw in him no qualities, either of mind or body, to make a soldier. He was therefore, "by divine providence, in his tender age," destined to be a clerk; had it not been for his childish ailments, he might have been all his days a thick-witted baron, spending all his time in the saddle, with harness on his back. Even here, however, he did not seem at first to have found his element; like most children he disliked his book, and for a long time he seems to have been allowed to run wild as he would. His features were plain, and nothing is said in his history about his mother's love. He was looked upon as half an idiot, and he used to tell of himself that the very servants would hardly sit at table with him, so much was he neglected and despised. Thus did God shield him from the deceitfulness of riches, for it is expressly said that his father was a rich man. He was nursed up in the school of poverty and humiliation, and the shadow cast from his sickly and unamiable childhood rested upon him throughout his life, tempering the burning heat of prosperity.

As is often the case with dull children, the reproaches of his friends, or the natural expansion of his mind, produced a sudden reaction, and he began to apply himself to study. His parents seeing him take this turn determined to send him to Paris;[1] thither then in early youth he went, as to the prin-

[1] He is said to have gone *in Gallias*, which probably implies Paris. It could not be Normandy, for which the author of Gilbert's life uses Neustria. John of Salisbury, when he relates his going abroad to study, says that he went *in Gallias*, and it only appears incidentally that he means Paris.—Metalog. i. 10.

cipal seat of learning in Europe. Our own Oxford, though more ancient as a seat of learning than Paris, had not yet attained its subsequent celebrity. It was a strong and fair city, with its castle rising high in the midst of the streams which all but surrounded it,[1] but it was then rather too warlike to be a great seat of learning, and had to stand many a siege before it attained to its eminence. Nor, indeed, was Oxford ever the intellectual centre of *Europe*, as was Paris; as the Archbishop of Canterbury was "the Pope of the farther world," so had Oxford a world of its own, with intellects as active and as penetrating as any which ruled the schools on the Continent. But Paris had, even in Gilbert's time, its four nations, one of which included even the far east.[2] To Paris then, and not to Oxford, came Gilbert; and he might, had it pleased him, have found food enough for his curiosity, for the quarrels between Realists and Nominalists had begun already to be heard in the schools of Paris. Roscelinus, the opponent of St. Anselm, had taught in Paris; and there was a person then in France whose name has spread wider than that of the heretical head of the Nominalists. Peter Abelard was still a young man, though probably about ten years older than Gilbert. The career of the two youths was, however, to be very different; the terms of the schools are banished from the life of Gilbert; it is not known who was his master, whether Bernard of Chartres, or William of Champeaux, or Abelard himself. Not but that he was, in after times, a distinguished teacher in

[1] Gesta Stephani, p. 958.

[2] Bulæus, vol. ii. 666.

England, but it was not God's will that intellect should be the most prominent part of his character. All that is said of his studies at the school of Paris is, that he made up by his diligence for the waste of his early years, and "received an abundant talent of learning." But it proved to be a good school of discipline for him, and a marked change took place in his character; he had to struggle with poverty, for his father, notwithstanding all his riches, gave but a poor maintenance to the son who had disappointed him. Again, amidst all the dangers which surrounded him, by a severe purity, he offered up his body as a sacrifice to the Lord, and thus the grace of God trained him for that work which he was destined to perform in the Church.

It is not known how long he remained at Paris, but he came back to England with the degree of master and license to teach.[1] He was not of those who remained on the mountain of St. Genevieve, disputing over and over again on the old questions, who were to be found by their friends after many a long year not a whit advanced from the point where they started. Nor did he repair, as did many scholars in those days, to Salerno, to exercise afterwards the more profitable art of medicine. Nor again did he seek, the courts of king or prelate to make his fortune. He did not even seek the cloister, much less there, as saith the quiet satirist[2] of the schools, carry his proud heart under the hood of St. Benedict and exempt himself from conventual discipline, by keeping his old profession.

[1] John of Salisbury, ii. 10.
[2] Ibid. Metalog. i. 4.

He went back to England, to his old home in his father's house, and opened a school, or, to give him his proper title, he became a regent master.

At this time, a schoolmaster was a man of great importance; his person was as inviolable as that of a clerk,[1] and he was considered as a half ecclesiastical personage. This office was a passport to the favour of kings and to ecclesiastical dignity. Two rulers of the schools of Bec at this time successively sat on the throne of Canterbury; Geoffrey, the schoolmaster of St. Katherine's, became Abbot of St. Albans, where a large library[2] had lately been laid up in the painted cupboards by Paul, the first Norman abbot, and a whole manor set apart for its maintenance. The education of the country was then carried on by the old schools which had been connected with the monasteries and the cathedrals and other churches.[3] No one could teach without a license, and this was to be obtained from any master who himself was the ruler of a school.[4] Sometimes a secular ruled the school of the monks, and a monk might rule a secular school,[5] but all were under

[1] Laws of Edw. the Conf. ap. Wilkins, vol. I. p. 310.

[2] Matt. Paris, pp. 1007 and 1036.

[3] The decree of the Council of Lateran mentions other churches besides the cathedrals. Saxon cathedral schools are mentioned at the end of the tenth century.—Wilkins, i. 265.

[4] It does not seem that at first any master whatever could give a license, at least in France, for it seems likely from a rescript of Alexander III., that the masters of the cathedral schools claimed the privilege of granting licenses, and the cause mentioned by John of Salisbury, letter 19, implies a monopoly within a certain district. The chancellor of the University of Paris is expressly allowed by Alexander to exact a fee, which also seems to give him a monopoly.

[5] Matt. Par. pp. 1007, 1039. St. Anselm, Ep. i. 30.

the control and patronage of the Church, as the decrees for their protection testify,[1] and it was considered almost simony to exact money for a presentation to a school, and no one could even let his school to another master. The universities were continually sending forth masters, who set up unendowed schools for themselves; and the Church soon after this, in Pope Alexander III.'s time, strengthened the hands of the old schools, by ordaining that each cathedral chapter should set apart a benefice for the master of the school, "because the Church of God, as a pious mother, is bound to provide for the poor, lest the opportunity of reading and improving themselves be taken away from them." At the same time, the same Pope[2] encourages to the utmost the establishment of new schools, where the masters would necessarily be paid by the scholars, by forbidding under an anathema any cathedral dignitary from exacting money for a license, from any one who wished to set up a school, provided he were only competent.

Such was the situation in which Gilbert was now placed; he had found his way back to the home of his youth, where he had lived neglected and despised, but he was now a much more important person than when he left it and was considered by his father as a degenerate son. Now the whole country round, from a great distance, came to hear the new doctor from Paris. Not only boys were put under his charge and young men became his hearers, but girls and maidens also came to be

[1] Council of London, A.D. 1138.
[2] Rescript, p. 2. ch. 18. ap. Mansi.

instructed by him. Females were not behindhand in the intellectual enthusiasm of the period. Learning was a romantic quest, an unknown land, in which even females might go forth and make discoveries. The well-known Heloise will occur to everybody, and the daughters of Manegold, a schoolman celebrated in his day, taught philosophy to those of their own sex. Here, then, Gilbert found himself in a situation of great responsibility. The obscure township of Sempringham had suddenly, through his means, sprung up into an extensive school. His father no longer looked upon him as an unworthy scion, and found that he might be usefully and even honourably employed without breaking bones at tournaments, or hunting and hawking over his lands. He therefore, instead of leaving him to glean a precarious subsistence from his pupils, supported him out of his possessions, and this enabled Gilbert to assume an authority over his scholars, which he could not otherwise have maintained. He walked about in a dress becoming the son of the lord of Sempringham, but all the while he was in heart a monk, and he began immediately to form his pupils into an association, which might save them from the dangers to which their situation exposed them. Not content with teaching them the trivium and quadrivium, he became their spiritual guide, and subjected them to a species of monastic discipline. Knowing how a breath may spoil the beautiful innocence of childhood, and yet how easily holy discipline may shut out the knowledge of evil till the soul is strong enough to fight against it, he

taught them to consecrate the whole day to God. The male children slept all together in a dormitory, where all might be controlled; he taught them reverence at church, and at certain times and places a religious silence was observed, and they had stated times for study and prayer. He was now happier than he had ever been before, beloved and honoured in his own home, and the guide of happy children and of a band of youths and maidens, who praised the Lord under his direction.

CHAPTER II

THE RECTORY

He was not long, however, to enjoy this peace ; two new churches were founded in his father's lands at Sempringham and Tirington. It does not appear whether Sir Joceline was himself the founder of them, at all events he conceived that the right of presentation belonged to him, and he nominated his son to the vacant churches. It was much against his will that he accepted the charge ; he knew that it would probably be disputed, and a lawsuit was of all things the most opposed to his character. On the other hand, he thought it his duty to defend his father's rights, and as the cause would come before an ecclesiastical tribunal and under the cognisance of the bishop, he could have no scruple in accepting the benefice, if it were given in his favour. A long lawsuit followed, as he had expected. If ever there was a system in confusion it was the parochial system of England at the Conquest. It had been introduced amongst us later than in any other of the existing kingdoms in Europe, and traces existed even after the conquest of the old division of church property by the bishop himself among his clergy ; Lanfranc, for instance, and William of St. Carilefe, Bishop of

Durham, were the first in their respective sees to separate the bishop's lands from those of the monks of the cathedral, who originally performed the functions of the parish priests. Thus the parishes in England were in that most dangerous of states, a state of transition; at first, matters are generally clear and simple, and then comes an intermediate state, when questions arise and everything is vague and floating, till evils and abuses compel authority to step in. At first all was in the hands of the bishop, and then the nobleman must have a private chapel, or oratory, as it was called, and nothing was more natural than that he should appoint his own chaplain, subject to the bishop's approval. Afterwards he began to find it too much to pay both chaplain and parish priest, and a law was necessary to force him to pay tithe to the mother church.[1] Out of these chapels often arose parish churches where there were none, and so the chapelry became a benefice, and the nobleman the patron. Or else the lord of a manor founded or endowed a church, and then the grateful church gave him the patronage, which became hereditary in his family or attached to the land. But a far different sort of patronage soon sprung up; church property was too tempting, and lay too much at the mercy of a strong hand, not to be exposed to the rapacity of an unscrupulous noble. The defenceless church was ever a convenient fund whence earl and baron drew money, whether a fortification

[1] Leges Eccl. Canuti, Wilkins's Concil. p. 302.

was to be constructed, or a body of armed men fitted out.[1] Sometimes a portion of the church lands was made over on a long lease to some powerful baron, who, with his good sword, was to clear them of a nest of robbers lurking in the woods, or to defend the church in times of danger.[2] These lands but too often never came back to the church. In other cases some benefactor or his descendant repented of his or his ancestor's liberality, and resumed what had been solemnly given over to the service of God. In the time of the Danes almost all the parish churches north of the Thames[3] had been destroyed, and when the footprints of the invader had passed away, the nobles took possession of the lands and kept them in their own hands. Church lands were thus passed on from father to son, like any other manor belonging to the lord, and were given as a dowry on the marriage of a daughter, and of course the right of presentation passed on with the possession.[4] A miserable pittance out of the tithes and produce was paid to some priest who was appointed to serve the church, and the rest belonged to the lord. The clergy themselves were by no means exempt from blame; the servile chaplain would come into the lord and lady's chamber and profane the most holy mysteries by saying mass to them in their bed. Sometimes the clergy themselves were the spoilers of the church; most of the Saxon

[1] III. Lat. Council, canon 19. [2] Matt. Paris, p. 998.

[3] Palgrave's Anglo-Saxon Const. p. 167.

[4] For an instance of the *advocatio* or presentation passing on with an unjust possession, *vide* Matt. of Paris, p. 1016.

priests were married, and livings often became a family inheritance, enjoyed in a direct line by the son after the father. Even in later times, in Normandy, mere children were sometimes put in possession of ecclesiastical benefices.[1] The right of presentation was sold like any other right belonging to the land, and that with the connivance of bishops.[2] Such was the miserable state of England before the Conquest, and the very improvement of affairs brought with it its own troubles. Parish churches sprang up everywhere,[3] and men, women, and children, might often be seen winding up the little pathway through the fields, to the sound of the merry bells, where never church had been before. But then first, the rights of the old parish were to be respected, and it was ordered that on some high festival, the priests of the new churches should go every year in procession, with cross and banner, to the mother church. Again, the rights of patrons were to be settled; and it is said that in England and Sweden these matters were in greater confusion than anywhere else. Certain it is, that when, in the third Lateran Council, the Church stepped in to settle the law of patronage, more rescripts on the subject were addressed by Pope Alexander III. to England than to any other country.

It is not surprising, then, that Sir Joceline of Sempringham should have had a lawsuit about the right of patronage. Even in those turbulent

[1] Council of Avranches, p. 1172.
[2] John of Salisbury, de Nug. Cur. 7, 17.
[3] Leges Regis Edwardi ap. Wilkins.

days men had recourse to law as well as now; and quibbles too about seals and charters were common, as when the Lincoln men objected to the Abbot of St. Albans that the charters of the abbey had no seal,[1] and it was answered that in good King Offa's time a golden cross was used instead of the pendent seal which the Confessor introduced. It does not, however, appear what was the objection made to Gilbert's father. It appears likely, from the terms used by Gilbert when he instituted the priory, that the church lands belonged to him not only as rector, but as lord of the manor inherited from his father, and this may have been the ground on which his father's right was questioned. A change had taken place in Sempringham since the Domesday survey, for it was now in the hundred of Alveton, and belonged to Gilbert of Ghent, who held it free of taxes of the king, which does not seem to have been the case at the time when the survey was taken. Of this nobleman, Sir Joceline held it as the mesne lord,[2] and it may be that it was doubted whether the presentation belonged to him or to Gilbert of Ghent.[3] Or else,

[1] Matt. Paris, p. 1026.

[2] This appears from the fact that Gilbert of Ghent gave the land to St. Gilbert to found his priory, and is said in the charter to have been a tenant *in capite*. The dominium of the land is said, indeed, to have belonged to Sir Joceline, but it appears that "domain" was applied to the manor of a mesne lord, v. Ellis's Index to Domesday, i. 230. The under-tenants of a nobleman were sometimes called barones.—Oderic, p. 589.

[3] A somewhat similar cause is decided in a rescript of Alexander III., in which it appears that a controversy had arisen between the nunnery of Wilton and a knight who had a lease of a part of the lands, concerning the right of presentation to a church situated on the land.

it may be that the title of these new-comers to the lands themselves appeared to be rather of might than right. However this be, the lawsuit was decided in Gilbert's favour, and he was accordingly canonically instituted by the Bishop of Lincoln, as rector of the parishes of Sempringham and Tirington. He was not in orders at the time when he became possessed of these livings; he therefore appointed a chaplain to serve the church in his room, and there was nothing irregular in this proceeding, for a license was allowed to students to hold ecclesiastical benefices without being as yet ordained.[1]

It was a beautiful sight, the parish of Sempringham under the rule of its youthful rector. His was a gentle rule, for he was himself under obedience, and such men are ever calm and disciplined in their manners, and meek in heart. He subjected himself in all things to his chaplain, who was his confessor and spiritual guide. Being master of the school, the education of his parishioners came naturally under his control, and he catechised and taught them with unwearied diligence. He taught them

[1] In rescripts of Alexander III., p. xv. ch. l., non-residence is allowed *studio literarum*. As late as Council of Rouen, 1231, the alternative is allowed to clerks possessing benefices, either of being ordained or betaking themselves to the study of theology. *Vicarii* or curates (otherwise called *capellani*) are recognised by Alexander III., and the rights of the rectors, to whom they were bound by oath, protected against them.—Vide Rescripts, p. xxxix. Even a lay rector is protected against his curate, though he is ordered to be ordained. See also Councils of Tours and of London, 1163 and 1175. A great laxity had been tolerated previous to the Lateran Council, and Alexander allowed a person who had been instituted before the age of fifteen to keep his benefice on that ground.—Rescripts, p. xxiii. 5.

the holy mysteries of religion through the external rites of the Church; he knew well how the sweet service of the Church soothes and softens down the rough hearts of rustics; he taught them early to reverence the house of God as the abode of angels, and above all the temple, on the altar of which was reserved the adorable sacrament. He humanised the minds of the simple peasantry by this teaching, and filled them with a religious awe, so that it is said that a parishioner of Sempringham could at once be known from any other by his reverential air on entering a church. At first he lived among his parishioners in the village itself of Sempringham. He, with his chaplain, had a lodging in the house where dwelt the father of a family[1] with his wife and children. The chaplain must have found himself in a new situation, for it was not often that the poor Anglo-Saxon priest was thus treated by the lay-rector of the living; and the son of the lord of the manor did not often abase himself to dwell in the house of the churl. Gilbert, however, found here more happiness than he had done in his father's hall; he was now in his vocation winning souls to God, working among the poor of the earth. The daughter of the householder with whom he dwelt was a holy and devout maiden, whose modest graces endeared her to the hearts of all the villagers. She was Gilbert's scholar, and was growing up beneath his eye in simplicity and holiness. God, however, did not allow him to dwell long beneath this peaceful roof. One night

[1] Paterfamilias, the House-bonde.—Vide Palgrave, p. 16.

he dreamed that he had laid his hand upon the maiden's bosom, and was prevented by some strange power from again withdrawing it. On awaking he trembled, for he feared lest God had warned him by this dream that he was on the verge of evil. He was utterly unconscious of the danger, but he revealed the temptation and the dream to his confessor, and asked him his opinion. The priest, in return, confessed that the same feeling had come over him; the result was, that they resolved to quit the neighbourhood of what might become danger. Gilbert had never wittingly connected evil with the pure and holy being before him; but his heart misgave him, and he went away. He knew that chastity was too bright and glorious a jewel to risk the loss of it; no man may think himself secure; an evil look or thought indulged in has sometimes made the first all at once to become the last; therefore the greatest saints have placed strictest guard upon the slightest thought, word, and action. Even the spotless and ever-virgin Mary trembled when she saw the angel enter her chamber.[1] And He, who was infinitely more than sinless by grace, even by nature impeccable, because He was the Lord from heaven, He has allowed it to be recorded that His disciples wondered that He talked with a woman. All the actions of our blessed Lord are most real, for He had taken upon Himself the very reality of our flesh, of the substance of the Virgin Mary; but each action is also most highly significant and symboli-

[1] St. Ambr. in Luc.

cal, so that, though all conduce to our great glory, yet all may be a warning to us in our greatest shame. Thus, though it would be unutterable blasphemy to connect with Him the possibility of sin, yet by this little act He has been graciously pleased to leave us an example, that as we should keep a dove-like purity of eye and thought, we should also, for the love of God, brave the scandal of evil tongues. And Gilbert imitated his blessed Lord, for though he fled from the very thought of danger, he still continued to guide her by his counsel; she does not disappear from the history, and by-and-by we shall see that the dream might have another meaning. After he left this house, he dwelt in a chamber constructed over the porch of the parish church of St. Andrew, at Sempringham. He scarcely ever left this holy place, but was either occupied in prayer in the church itself, or teaching his school, or catechising his parishioners. His scholars, though still seculars, continued to live all but as monks under his guidance; and the care which he took in forming their minds and in ruling his parish left him but little time to himself. He was not an idle ruler, nor did his sweetness of manner prevent his exertion of his authority wherever it was necessary. None know how to be angry but those who can be angry with calmness, as our Lord when He made a whip of cords and drove out them that sold doves, and overturned the tables of the money-changers. On one occasion one of his parishioners, when he had reaped his land, laid all the rich corn in his barn, without giving thanks to God, and separating the tenth

part for the Church. He was chuckling over his fraud, and thinking that the rector was much too simple to find it out, and much too spiritual to care for it, if he did. But he was mistaken, for not only did the rector find out the fraud, but he made him take all the corn out of his barn and count it before him sheaf by sheaf; and then he collected together the tenth part, and heaping it up in the midst of the village, burnt it all in open day, in the sight of the wondering rustics. They then learned to know Gilbert better, and found, that though he cared but little about his own rights, he would not allow the Church of God, which he represented, to lose a tittle of her dues.

CHAPTER III

THE BISHOP'S PALACE

A PARISIAN doctor was, however, too great a personage to be left in the little village of Sempringham ; he was not destined to remain long in peace with his scholars and parishioners. Robert Bloet, his diocesan, the Bishop of Lincoln, sent for him, made him a clerk, by conferring on him one of the minor orders, and bade him live in his household. What sort of life he was likely to lead at this time, and why he was sent for, may be guessed at, because it is known what sort of a man the Bishop himself was. It is to be hoped that he was a sadder and a wiser man than he had been, when he sent for Gilbert. He had been chancellor of England under William Rufus, by whom he was made Bishop of Lincoln, and under Henry I. High Justiciar ; he was a man whose exterior was formed to win all hearts, and whose eloquent tongue and talents for business had enabled him to gain the favour of the wild and stormy William, as well as the smooth and unscrupulous Henry. His career runs parallel with St. Anselm's, for both were appointed by William Rufus, in that good mood which sickness brought upon him, but the career of the two prelates soon

separated. It would be needless to follow them; suffice it to say that Robert found to his cost that it was easier to rule the Red King, when the wild fit was on him, than to escape the more dangerous anger of Henry. The king had been beaten by the Saint, and probably loved not those ministers who had helped him to his defeat. He turned round on the Bishop of Lincoln, and contrived to find a charge against him by which he was stripped of much of his wealth. Then, when his knights were dismissed and his glittering train of noble pages gone, and his gold and silver vessels broken up, he looked round on his almost empty halls, on the shaven crowns and sober dresses of his clerks, and rough sheep-skin dresses of his serving-men, and burst into tears. Bitterly then must he have repented of his cowardice, when, with the other three bishops, he said to the bold Saint, that his holiness was above them, and that he must go on his way alone, for the love of kindred and of the world had wound round their hearts too tightly to allow them to follow.[1] Bitterly must he have wept over the time when he consecrated the abbots, who had received investiture from Henry's hand. It was at this time, probably, that he sent for Gilbert, that his gentle hand might soothe him in his desolation and penitence. The close of the prelate's busy life was at hand; one day some one wished to comfort him by repeating some words of praise, with which the king had honoured him in his absence. But he knew the crafty king too well to trust him, and

[1] Eadmer ap. Anselm. ed. Ben. pp. 4, 7, 65.

said with a sigh: "The king praises none of his servants but those whom he would utterly smite down."[1] A few days after he went to Woodstock, where Henry was holding high festival with a number of nobles, and the curious beasts which he had collected from foreign lands; as the prelate was walking with the king and the Bishop of Salisbury, he fell down in a fit of apoplexy and never spoke more.

Gilbert's mission at the episcopal palace of Lincoln did not, however, stop here, and he had probably a harder part to play with Alexander, who succeeded to the bishopric, than with his broken-hearted predecessor. He was the nephew of the greatest prelate in England, that Roger of Salisbury whom Henry I., when his fortunes were at the lowest, took into his service, as a poor priest, at Caen. Henry, when he became King of England, did not forget his old companion in poverty, and it was a fine thing to be the nephew of Roger, for he had at his disposal whatever he chose to ask for. Alexander was brought up in his palace, and unhappily imbibed a taste for splendour and for architecture. Had he stopped when he rebuilt his cathedral, and vaulted it with stone, it had been well; but, unfortunately, he loved military architecture as well as ecclesiastical. At Newark, a stately castle was built by him on a hill, which stretched its green and flowery slope above the river Trent;[2] at Sleaford and Banbury, two more castles kept watch over his

[1] Henry of Huntingdon, ap. Wharton. p. ii. p. 695.

[2] Vernantissimum florida compositione. Henric. Huntin. lib. 8, p. 389.

extensive diocese. This might have been allowed during Henry's reign; he would much rather have seen castles in the hands of his bishops than of the nobles, whom the policy of his whole reign tended to humble. He knew well that the lance was a much safer weapon in a bishop's hands, than the pastoral staff. Stephen, his successor, was not so politic; kings loved to reduce their prelates to the state of feudal barons, but there was rather too much feudality in three good castles of stone, besides that of Devizes, said to be the finest of Europe, belonging to Alexander's uncle of Salisbury. He determined to take the castles into his own custody, and the bishops soon gave him an opportunity. They would ride about with armed retainers, and men with arms in their hands will quarrel, so when in 1139 they came to Oxford, to a council held by the king, the soldiers of the bishops fought with those of Alan of Brittany, about the lodgings assigned to their masters. Much blood was shed, and one soldier killed, but at last the bishops won the day, and the earl was beaten. Stephen seized upon this pretext, and bade the bishops give up their castles, as a hostage for their good behaviour. On their refusal, he seized the prelates, and kept them in custody. Soon after, he took Alexander with him to Newark, and, as he had done before to Roger, he declared that till the castle was surrendered, no food should pass the Bishop's lips. With tears did Alexander implore his own garrison to yield his fair castle, and with no less wretchedness did he see the king's soldiers marching up the green slope, and enter-

ing the gate of his stronghold; and before he had turned his back upon it, the royal standard of England floated on its walls. The issue of the preceding contest, about investitures, had taught men that the office of the bishop was totally distinct from that of the temporal lord: as a lord, he might do homage, but the ring and the staff could not come from an earthly king. If, therefore, English prelates would now sink the bishop in the baron, they must pay the penalty. Stephen afterwards pleaded in council, that he had starved Roger, not as bishop, but as his own servant.

We have here somewhat anticipated the history, in order to show this bishop's character; Alexander was taught a severe lesson, and meddled no more with military matters. As, however, Gilbert had ceased to be an inmate in the bishop's palace before his misfortunes, he must have dwelt in the bishop's court at Lincoln, in the height of its magnificence. His eyes must have been dazzled with the glittering of burnished armour, mixing in the splendid pageant with the cope of the ecclesiastic, while the cross preceded the bishop and the lance brought up the rear; his ears were bewildered with the clang of trumpets and the ringing of steel. What was he to do in the midst of such a court? And yet, strange to say, he was in high favour with both Robert and Alexander. Evil is mixed up with good in Christ's Church, like the cross and the weapons of the world in Alexander's retinue. Gilbert, going about this splendid house in his plain clerical apparel, was the representative of the cross. Such was his intimacy with the bishop, that he slept in the same

chamber with him. Where could have been his vigils and his fasts at the sumptuous tables and in the magnificent bedchamber of Alexander? He managed to contrive both; he said himself, with a reproachful tone, after he became a monk, that when he was in the bishop's palace he used to tame his flesh by more fasts, prayers, and spiritual exercises, than he ever could compass afterwards. Sometimes the inmates of the palace found that he was too good to suit them, as for instance, the clerk, who, after once reciting the office with him, found that he lengthened the service so much by frequently bowing his knees to the ground, that, says Gilbert's biographer, "he swore that he would never pray with him again." One day a prelate came on a visit to the episcopal palace at Lincoln, and shared the chamber where the bishop and Gilbert of Sempringham slept. The strange bishop tossed upon his couch and could not sleep; his eye wandered about the darkened room, enlightened only by the glimmering of a taper. All on a sudden he saw a shadow moving quickly up and down on the opposite wall. He gazed on it in fear for some time, but at last mustering courage, he rose and stealthily approached. He found to his surprise Gilbert awake and in prayer, sometimes standing, sometimes on his knees, raising his hands to heaven in earnest supplication. The bishop shrunk back to his couch, and next morning he smilingly accused his brother of Lincoln of having a mountebank in his room to dance to him at night. Strange is the approximation of good and evil in those days of faith; perhaps it was then more frequent than it

is now, or rather from the greatness of the good the evil came out in greater contrast and in an exaggerated form. Gilbert and Alexander of Lincoln lying side by side! And yet, stranger perhaps is the mixture of good and evil in the same heart. In the pages of history various personages float before us and appear as the types of certain principles; yet, when by chance we can look upon them close, we find them not so bad. Thus Alexander to us is the mere worldly prelate; he appears, as he was called in the Roman court, only as the magnificent Alexander. Yet there was a struggle in his heart too, and Gilbert was to him as his good angel. He insisted on his being ordained priest, and almost by force the awful power of the priesthood was conferred on Gilbert. The bishop's next step showed his just appreciation of his powers and turn of mind. The din of Nominalism and Realism had sounded about Gilbert in vain, without producing any impression; abstract questions could not awaken his mind; but put before him a case of conscience or of spiritual direction, he would grapple with it at once. The bishop accordingly made him, as far as we can make out the vague terms of his biographer, a sort of penitentiary[1] of the diocese. At times, Alexander himself, with all his worldliness, knelt at his feet in the confessional. A man who seeks a severe confessor, cannot be wholly bad, and though Gilbert, as we shall see,

[1] The first general institution of a penitentiary was at the fourth Lateran Council, 1215, but it appears from Thomassin that particular dioceses in earlier times had their penitentiaries. Vet. et Nov. Disc. i. 2. c. 10.

left him still in the midst of his grandeur, there is proof that in the day of adversity, he had not forgotten the Church of St. Andrew at Sempringham, or its holy rector.

Gilbert's work now lay among the sins and wickednesses of mankind; the worst and most horrid forms of sin came under his cognisance, for of this nature were those reserved for the jurisdiction of the bishop, whose representative he was. To him also the clergy of the diocese referred all cases of difficulty which occurred in the practice of the confessional. This required both learning and experience; instead of his little churches of Sempringham and Tirington, he had the whole diocese of Lincoln for his parish. To decide the cases which came before him, in his day, probably was more difficult than it would have been in the next century. He lived only on the verge of the age of systems. Canon law had not been compiled by Gratian; no one had as yet professed it at Paris, nor had Master Vacarius lectured at Oxford;[1] appeals to Rome were but just in England taking the legal and precise form,[2] finally fixed by Alexander III. And yet canons are as old as the first council of Jerusalem, recorded in the Acts, and appeals to Rome have been since Athanasius threw himself and his cause on Pope Julius; so, too, the germs of casuistry existed in the old penitentials, though Christian morals had not yet been moulded into a science by St. Thomas. Gilbert had only the more

[1] Gerv. Act. Pont. Cant. ap. Twysden, p. 1665; Chron. Norm. ap. Duchesne, p. 983.

[2] Ibid. and Henr. Huntin. lib. viii. p. 226; Script. post. Bed.

difficult task to fulfil; the tremendous power of the keys was chiefly delegated to him by the bishop, and he had so much the less to guide him in its exercise. What are the difficulties in casuistry, it is hard for those to tell to whom its existence is unknown. All appears smooth to him who hardly knows that he has a conscience, so little does he exercise it; so, also, the difficulties of the confessional can only be known to him who is practised in it. Gilbert had to frame for himself the rules of that art created by Christianity, which has sin for its subject matter, with all the sickening details of the wickedness of the human soul, that wonderful art which is founded on Christ's divine command, "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted." Christian morals has, from its very nobleness, many difficulties in practice; this, however, is an imperfection incident to the highest human sciences, and their professors cannot consistently urge it as an objection against this one, which is divine. It has to do with subjects to which language is inadequate, and which thought can hardly compass, and yet it is a real science, which can be taken to pieces and viewed on all sides, and drawn out at length, and be systematised, and made consistent. It has its definitions and its axioms, its premises and its deductions. But though to define a venial sin may be easy, yet to tell it in practice from one that is mortal, may be difficult. The broken language of a penitent is hard to interpret; and all the dark labyrinths of a wicked heart hard to disentangle. Cases are infinitely varied in practice, for the hideous forms of guilt are infinite, and many of them may

come across theories, however clearly drawn out. If it be hard to tell how to rectify a complicated disease of the body, what must it be when, by external symptoms, men try to judge of the complex motives of a human heart, jostling and crossing each other in every direction? Christianity, while it has exalted, has rendered the science of morals more complex. As Christ, on the mount, delivered a new code, so the Church has created new virtues and new crimes, possible only in Christianity, as, for instance, simony and heresy. This may help us to understand Gilbert's functions, all but the highest that could be on earth. His eye had to look curiously into the putrid sores of the human soul, and his heart must have often sunk within him; yet he had the power to cleanse them. He was a physician as well as a judge. Truly it is the order of priesthood which makes Christian history to differ from Pagan. The history of Christendom is a terrible scene; in reading its records of wholesale simony and petty jobbing, of bold crime and coward virtue, we are tempted to say, "in what respect is the world changed?" But looking for a moment on Christian times, even with the cold eye of an historian, they have this remarkable difference from those which preceded them, that all through, there exists a body of men, the ministers of a kingdom, standing beside the kingdoms of the earth, with laws of its own, and resting entirely on invisible sanctions, the meanest of them claiming in his own sphere to be above an earthly king, and at whose feet kings may kneel. These men, again, are not an hereditary caste; they are cut off from earthly ties; they have only the

usufruct of their property, and a stranger possesses it after them. These are the men who constitute Christianity, as far as it is a visible system; take away the independence of its jurisdiction, and the power of its priests, to all external appearance at least, Christendom is merged in the world. It was this compact system which Gilbert had now in a great measure to wield in the diocese of Lincoln, as the bishop's representative. This is priestcraft proper, and a gentle craft it is. It can keep the soul of the child pure from sin, or crush it in the bud; preserve the young man chaste as a maiden, and heal the wounds in the soul of a hardened sinner.

CHAPTER IV

THE NUNNERY

WHAT all this while has become of Gilbert's two parishes of Sempringham and Tirington? Was his school broken up, and were his scholars dispersed? His chronicler says nothing about it, but, as will appear in the sequel, he certainly kept up his communication with his favourite pupils. The whole of the revenues of Tirington he gave up absolutely out of his hands; and out of those of Sempringham, he took but what was really necessary, bestowing the rest entirely upon the poor. Though the bishop's command and the office which he held must have taken away all scruple from his mind as to non-residence, still he was too poor in spirit to derive more from his benefice than the mere necessaries of life. His heart was not at rest in Alexander's palace; the baron and the bishop were far too much identified to suit him. The trumpet of the cavalier ever and anon broke in sharply on the cathedral chant and the song of the choir. Besides, in any bishop's palace he would not have been in his element. He was a true parish priest, and the rude rafters of his own little church suited him far better than the stone vault of the cathedral. His heart was

with the rustics whom he had taught, and whose minds he had refined by his instructions; he loved the wild fens, where the poor Saxon still lurked, better than the episcopal city. His plans had all been broken up when the bishop's command had called him away from Sempringham, and he had only submitted to leave it in obedience to the will of God. His heart yearned for the youths and maidens whom he had taught in his school, and for his village children, and the rude husbandmen and housewives whose souls he had raised from the dust, to which many a long year of toil had well-nigh bound them. In addition to this, he seems to have felt a growing conviction that with such a bishop as Alexander he could do nothing where he was. The secular clergy had never yet recovered from the wretched state in which the Norman invasion had found them; and however gradual and merciful had been the introduction of the law of celibacy among them, still the canons of the councils at the time show plainly that the new state of things sat uneasily upon them. They still wanted their hereditary benefices, and that continual progress towards the secularisation of Church property to which the Saxon church had been tending. The grave and august idea of a body of unmarried clergy is with difficulty grasped by those on whom it is binding, hard as it is to eradicate it, when once it has taken root. Flagrant disorders had therefore broken out among the clergy, which required new and stringent laws to repress them. Alexander was present at the council which met to reform the Church in 1127,

but a splendid and a military prelate was not the man to enforce the strict provisions of such an assembly. Gilbert seems to have felt this bitterly. One of the seven archdeaconries of Lincoln was offered to him by Alexander, probably soon after this very council of London. Its sixth canon had solemnly conjured all archdeacons to assist in enforcing celibacy, as was their duty, and Gilbert felt that this high office was one which his shoulders could not bear. The archdeacons of Lincoln were great men; and one of them is said by Henry of Huntingdon, to be "the richest of all the archdeacons now in England." But Gilbert loved poverty too well to be a princely churchman, and he refused the office, saying, at the same time, that he knew no quicker way to perdition. He felt himself totally unfit to rule so many; his path, he thought, lay among the poor of the earth, among simple rustics and children; but he trembled at the thought of being set on high among the clergy, with power to chastise. The bishop, seeing him so much in earnest, gave up the point.

It appears to have been not long after this, and about the year 1130, that he left the bishop's palace altogether.[1] The immediate cause of his departure is not known. That the step did not alienate Alexander from him is evident from the

[1] It appears that he left it in the reign of Henry I., for his biographer says that the nunnery was founded by him in that reign. As Henry died in 1135, he probably quitted Lincoln a few years before that time. The Derby annals bring it nearer, by fixing the date of the nunnery at 1131. It probably was between 1127 and 1131.

uniform support which he ever after received from the bishop. He went back to his parish with the greatest joy; he found much alteration in his old friends. The young girl whom he had left in her father's house, was now a grown-up maiden. He himself was changed also: he went away a layman, but he was now a priest, and his parishioners were now properly his flock, whom he could feed with his own hand, and not by another's. Besides this, he had many years' experience in the confessional, and the guidance of souls. The habits of purity and austerity which he had ever practised, had now become invigorated by years, and his character for sanctity had been spread abroad by his high station, so as to be well-nigh above the reach of scandal. It should also be observed, that from the fact which he himself states, of the large patrimony which had fallen to his lot, his father must have died between his return from Paris, and the time of which we are now writing. He was, therefore, lord of the manor of Sempringham, and a rich man. From the terms which he uses,[1] it also appears that the power which he had over his parish churches was very great. It may be that the Church lands were in the hands of his family; at all events, he was the patron, as well as the incumbent of the living. Possessed, as he was, also, of the favour of one of the most powerful prelates in England, what might he not hope to do, with wealth and power in his hands? He had long made up his mind to give up all for Christ's sake; the only question was, how

[1] He says that he wishes "mancipare divino cultui ecclesias," which he possessed "libera possessione."

it was to be done. Father and mother were dead, and he was alone in the world; for it does not appear that he had either brother or sister. His whole thoughts were concentrated in his spiritual children; and they were to him father and mother, and brethren and sisters. For their use, he intended to give up his patrimony, and to restore the churches of Sempringham and Tirington, absolutely into the hands of the Church, which, during his father's life, he could not do. His intimacy with the bishop left him very much the choice of the mode of so doing, and he waited quietly God's time, till he could see how it could best be done. He certainly had no deep views on the subject; and the foundation of an order appears never to have entered his head. With all its deep self-devotion, his mind was of a quiet and a homely cast. Indeed, his was, in all respects, if we may so say, a homely lot; his parish was the home of his childhood, and his parishioners were those whose familiar faces he had known, even when, a neglected boy in his father's house, he was so little like the heir to the lands and the manor; the youths and the maidens whom he was now guiding, were the first favourite pupils of his school. His character, therefore, is a specimen of one which seldom appears in the history of the times, and which yet must be taken into the account, if we would understand them. It is quite true, that they were times of romance; the history of most monasteries would probably be what is called romantic. As, in the world, rapine and violence, and clever fraud, were the order of the day, so also, in religion, the great and mighty

good by which God overthrew wickedness, was often done, as it were, by fits and starts, by a holy violence, which took heaven and earth by force. The whole structure of society was framed on a notion of law, partially restraining physical force, and yet legalising it, by bringing it under its cognisance. Thus the legal trial by battle, which, be it remembered, sometimes decided ecclesiastical causes,[1] was but the law interposing, to regulate what would be sure to have taken place, without its interposition. So again, the monastic rule was the regulation of the self-devotion with which God inspired holy men and women, who thirsted for a more perfect way. Hence, side by side with the charter of the monastery, would often be its history, telling how there once dwelt in the greenwood an outlaw, and as he slept on a grassy knoll, among his merry men, under the trees, in the summer time, God, in His mercy, sent him a vision, and he left his followers and became a hermit, in the place where, afterwards, the abbey was built.[2] And these stories were very often the real truth, though at other times they were legends—that is, truth, mixed with falsehood. At the same time, it should always be remembered, that as, besides the romantic side of things, there were law and custom, and deep policy in the affairs of the world, so also, the Church was a compact and an orderly body, with its rules of holy obedience, its laws and canons. It had its quiet parish priests, and to this class, to all appearance, Gilbert was to the end of life to belong.

[1] Matt. Par. p. 1053.
[2] Dugdale, Mon. Angl. 6, 893.

England had, it is true, its secluded nooks and its vast forests, where earl or baron,[1] as he rode through its depths, winding his horn in the merry chase, would light on a holy hermit, clad in skins, serving God in the hole of the rock; but it had besides its green meadows and noiseless streams, with the willows on their banks, and the miller's pool, and all the tame scenery which meets us nowadays. Gilbert's lot seemed likely to be cast in with those whose good deeds are confined to one little spot; but the quiet brook often widens into the broad river, and our Lord willed that this lowly tree, planted by the water-side, should bear fruit an hundred-fold.

His first thought was to establish a monastery in the parish, and to connect it with the parish church. It was to be the headquarters of religion at Sempringham, and the visible centre round which all religious associations would cling. In this way alone could the wild and untamed vices of the rude people be cured; human nature can hardly believe that its strong passions can be restrained at all, till they have seen men within whom all human desires are actually dead. Gilbert first intended that his future convent was to be inhabited by monks; he watched diligently the spiritual progress of the most promising among the men of his flock, but they were bowed down with the cares of this world. If he could keep them from open sin, he thought himself happy. Monks and nuns are not commodities to be found everywhere, and to be moulded for the

[1] Dugdale, Mon. Angl. 6, 893.

nonce whenever they are wanted. Funds may be found, and buildings raised, and vestments manufactured, but it requires a special vocation from God to make man or woman renounce the world. And God at this time favoured Gilbert, for He had, in His goodness, determined that amidst the wickedness of the land, Sempringham should be the abode of holy virgins, whose purity would rise up before Him as a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour. From the early habits which he had acquired in his school, Gilbert had ever loved children; probably the remembrance of his own wayward childhood might have risen up before him, and inspired him with a desire of guiding them to keep their souls in their first unsullied brightness. He had thus acquired a natural influence over the children of the place which he had never lost, and when he came back from Lincoln, a priest of high reputation, none welcomed him more gladly than the maidens, who were but children when he left them. The world had not sullied them in the meanwhile, and he found that the good seed which he had sown in their hearts had sprung up and borne fruit. And now that his plan of founding a community of monks had failed, he turned his thoughts towards them. The strict habits of religious seclusion in which he had been cherished, indisposed him greatly to attempt the establishment of a nunnery. How could he, who had quitted the house in which he lodged on account of a dream, now undertake the government of a female community? It is true that the intercourse between the sisters and their director was so reduced to rule that, however

familiar, it was one of ceremony, like the ordinary customs of society; yet from his innate mistrust of self, he shrunk from the responsibility. It is probable that some time elapsed before he could make up his mind to take the final step. At length he could not resist such evident marks of God's will; the quiet and calm resolution of the maidens to dedicate themselves for ever, showed that it was not the sentimentalism of a moment, but a real vocation from above. He went to the Bishop of Lincoln to consult him on the subject; Alexander received him with the utmost cordiality, and entering warmly into his views, sent him back with all the necessary powers. The holy virgins were filled with joy at the news. None can estimate the greatness of the joy of a woman's heart when the love of Christ has fully seized upon it. Terrible as it is in its strength when fixed upon an earthly object, its intensity is increased tenfold when it rests upon the heavenly spouse. How wonderful has been the self-devotion of women from the first dawn of Christianity! None can think upon the wonders of the Incarnation without thinking upon the mother of the Lord; and none can tell the wellspring of joy in that heart on which lay the Saviour of the world, for a favour was granted to her which not the highest archangel can estimate. Ever since that time some portions of the same joy must in a measure have inundated the heart of every virgin who has become the spouse of the Lord. What must have been the gush of joy in the heart of the Magdalene when the ever-blessed Lord said, "Mary," and she turned and saw Him, the everlasting source of all joy? Such in its

measure must have been the happiness of the seven virgins for whom Gilbert, with the Bishop's leave, now built a cloister adjoining the north wall of the church of Sempringham. Among them, the maiden whom Gilbert left in her father's house, shut up her beauty for ever from the eyes of men. These seven virgins, chanting the praises of God in the dead of night around the altar of that little church, doubtless averted the anger of God from the land, with all its terrible pollutions. Such souls as these, who sit in quiet, with mortified bodies and chastened hearts ever fixed on heaven, have their own place in the Christian scheme. If any one doubts it, let him think on the time when the Lord dwelt with His virgin mother in the house at Nazareth. No one will say that any part of our Lord's sojourn on earth was useless ; and yet the world knows nothing of what was going on during these many years, except that in that poor cottage were obedience, and daily tasks and contemplation.

Before, however, going on to notice the important result to which these small beginnings of the Order of Sempringham afterwards grew, we should cast our eyes across the Channel to France, where a parallel movement had taken place rather earlier in the century. It is seldom that any movement occurs in any corner of the Church without being felt elsewhere ; nothing stops with itself in the body of Christ, it at once vibrates in some other part, sometimes close, and sometimes distant. Thus, about the year 1100, the blessed Robert of Arbrissel, had founded the Abbey of Fontevraud, which agrees remarkably with what the

Priory of Sempringham, as we shall see, soon became. Like Gilbert, Robert was a Parisian doctor, and like him had been summoned from a school to be the chief adviser of the bishop of his diocese, and the reformer of the clergy. On the death of this prelate, Silvester, Bishop of Rennes, the rage of those who loved not his reforms, drove him away. Henceforth his life presents a marked contrast to that of Gilbert; he became a hermit, and sought the depths of a wild forest near Anjou. The savage wilderness did not, however, sour his heart; he learned to converse with God; and when soon after his solitude was discovered, the sweetness which shone on his emaciated features, won all beholders; and when he spoke, the fervour of his words gained the hearts of his hearers. Crowds streamed into the wilderness to hear this new preacher of righteousness, and many left the world on the spot, to join him in his forest. Urban II., in his voyage to France, heard of Robert's fame, and sent for him; he bade him preach before the council of Anjou, and the burning words of this hermit, thus fresh from the wilderness, and reappearing among men, seemed to him so striking, that he called him the Sower of the Word, and bade him henceforth go about as an Apostolic preacher. Robert obeyed the supreme pontiff, and went forth as a missionary. He went about the neighbouring dioceses, penetrating into the wildest villages, and preaching in streets and market-places. The effect was electric; crowds of men and women followed him everywhere, and everywhere

some souls were converted to Christ, from a life of wickedness. He walked barefoot, fasted continually, and often spent the whole night in prayer. Pope Urban was right; this was just the apostle to despatch among a population where fearful licentiousness is said to have reigned. Women, especially, were touched by his words, and it is expressly said, that while two of his companions assisted him in directing men, he had the exclusive direction of females. We know that our most blessed Lord, to whom the sight of sin must have been an inconceivable pain, suffered a foul adulteress to be near Him, and said to her, Go, and sin no more; Mary Magdalene came still nearer to Him, and washed His feet with her tears. And Robert, following the steps of his Lord, was especially known as the converter of the most miserable outcasts of society. One day, at Rouen, he entered into a haunt of sin; some unhappy wretches clustered about him, and he spoke to them of the mercy of Christ. They looked on, in stupid wonder, till one of them said, "Who art thou that speakest thus? For twenty years have I been in this house, and no one has spoken to me of God, or bade me not despair of mercy." The poor creatures followed him out of the house, and afterwards led a life of penitence. But it was not only such miserable victims that Robert, by God's grace, saved from inveterate sin; Bertrada de Montfort, who in the very Cathedral of Tours, on the eve of Whitsunday, seduced the heart of King Philip of France, and planned to fly from her lord, the Count of Anjou—the dangerous

and scheming beauty, the witchery of whose talents had well-nigh won her a crown—Bertrada, the scandal of the age, whom a Pope in council had excommunicated with her guilty paramour, was converted by Robert, and ended her days in the most rude penances, a nun of Fontevraud. It was there, in the midst of waste and uncultivated lands, covered with a wild thicket of brushwood, that Robert collected all those whom he had won from the world for Christ. His first monastery was but a collection of rude huts, separated into two divisions, with two separate oratories, one for the brethren, the other for the sisters. Around that part in which the females dwelt, was a rough enclosure, which was nothing but a high hedge of thorns.[1] The nuns were all day long engaged in prayer and psalmody, while the monks laboured with their hands to support them, and struggled with the stubborn thorn and the tangled weeds, the

1 Mr. Michelet, in his History of France, has repeated a story against the blessed Robert which even Bayle, though he indulged his foul wit on the subject, acknowledged to be false. The story is founded on two letters, one of Geoffrey of Vendôme, and another of Marbodus, Bishop of Rennes. Mr. Michelet should have recollected that both Geoffrey and Marbodus profess to speak merely on hearsay, and Geoffrey is known to have changed his opinion, while it may be presumed that Marbodus did so too, from the fact, that his friend Hildebert, of Mans, was one of Robert's greatest patrons. Besides which, there is great reason to believe that the letter ascribed to Marbodus is really by the heretic, Roscelinus. It is a great pity that Mr. Michelet's inveterate habit of generalising should lead him to prefer general, to particular truth. We do not charge him with dishonesty ; on his theory, all history is a myth, and, therefore, an opinion is just as valuable as a fact. When we have myths we must make the best of them ; but let not good personages of flesh and blood be treated like Romulus and Remus, if facts can be had.

growth of centuries, around their habitation. Even in the lifetime of Robert, Fontevraud had grown into a large monastery. Within its enclosure there were, in fact, three monasteries, one for holy virgins, dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin, another for penitent women, called after St. Mary Magdalene, and a third was a lazar-house for the sick and the lepers. The reform spread throughout France, and in many parts of the country lands were given to Robert, where he founded new houses, where those unhappy women, whom the world had soiled, might find a refuge, where they might chastise by rude penances those bodies, the temples of the Holy Ghost, which they had stained. But the peculiarity of the Order was, that the Abbess everywhere held jurisdiction over the monks as well as the nuns ; the men were there only to labour for the sisters, as St. John ministered to the blessed Virgin. Robert's work did not die with him, and many a daughter of the blood royal of France became famous for her piety as Abbess of Fontevraud. Here our own Henry Plantagenet and Richard Cœur de Lion were buried : and here Eleanor too, Henry's queen, the beautiful and guilty daughter of William of Aquitaine, who transferred herself with Guienne and Poitou, and all her lands, to the English crown, she, too, after her long and restless life, bequeathed her body to Fontevraud, that it might lie by the side of her husband and her son.

Any one will see at once the correspondence of the rise of this Order on the Continent with that of the nunnery of Sempringham, and a great conformity between the two will soon be apparent, as

Sempringham develops; and yet there at once also appears a great contrast between them. The movement in the two countries appears to have been different. While in France the queens of the time are the scandal of the age; those of England and Scotland appear as reformers of the corrupt court of their husbands. The beautiful sorceress Bertrada placed the King of France under the ban of the Church of Rome, ever the great defender of the purity of marriage. Queen Eleanor, with her licentious train, had the merit of ruining the crusade which St. Bernard preached; she too must needs go to the Holy Land, the daughter of the sunny south, the land of the gay science and of heresy, she whose character had far more to do with the burning East than became a Christian queen. But on our side of the Channel were Matilda and St. Margaret, the reformers of Scotland, who banished from the kingdom many foul relics of Paganism which still infected it; and in England was Matilda, the wife of Henry I., the "good Queen Maude," whom the English hailed as the daughter of their ancient kings, and whose marriage tended to amalgamate the Norman and the Saxon races. Terrible as was the licentiousness in England, the nobles seem everywhere to have been the guilty parties. The monasteries were filled with virgins who had fled thither to preserve themselves from the dangers to which they were exposed. Matilda herself was taken out of a convent, whither she had fled for that purpose, and was for that reason adjudged by St. Anselm not to have really taken the veil, and to be still competent to become Henry's wife. The

wicked nobles, whom the gentle majesty of her virtue kept in awe, nicknamed the king and queen Godric and Godiva,[1] and laughed at Henry's domestic life with his quiet Saxon queen. They still remembered the terrible license of the Red King's wicked court. Corresponding to this difference between the two countries was the contrast in the characters of Gilbert and of Robert. The wild energy of the hermit of Arbrissel was necessary to bear down the torrent of vice which opposed him; could any one but a barefooted hermit speak to hearts spoiled by inveterate sin, and cleanse bosoms encrusted with a leprosy of guilt? Gilbert had to do with untainted lilies fit for the garden of the Lord, he therefore had but to build his cloister adjoining to the quiet parish church of Sempringham, while the rough thorn-hedge, and the rougher discipline of Robert were necessary for Fontevraud. While Robert roams through France by the apostolic mandate, preaching everywhere a crusade of penitence, Gilbert returns to the home of his childhood, and places his seven holy virgins in the church where he had first learned to worship God, and where, in all probability, he had been baptized. The Church of Christ could find room enough for both, just as around the Cross, there was room for the ever-virgin Mary and St. Mary Magdalene. Holy virginity is no less a portion of Christianity than holy penitence, and the denial of the virtue of the one most certainly impairs the full

[1] The wit seems to consist in the names being Saxon. Godiva comes, probably, from the old story of the Saxon queen who saved the people from taxation.

belief in the other, for the Communion of Saints and the Forgiveness of Sins lie close together in the creed. Nor is holy virginity the creation of an age of romance; Gilbert, when he built the cloister at Sempringham, thought but little, as we shall soon see, of picturesque processions and flowing robes of white; he only thought of the Blessed Virgin, and of St. John, and of the white-robed choir in heaven, who have followed the Virgin Lamb wherever He hath gone. Still less did he think about the usefulness of what he was doing; as well might he have thought about the uses of chastity, for virginity is only chastity carried to a supernatural degree. Our Blessed Lord has exalted human nature; He hath made it the partaker of His own Divinity; and we have virtues which were never possible before the coming of the Lord, because their formal cause was wanting, even the Holy Spirit. Faith, Hope, and Charity have their foundation in the will and in the intellect, yet they are supernatural, because of the new powers which the adorable Incarnation has infused into our nature. It is not then to be wondered at, if their outward acts should sometimes take a form which seemed beyond the powers of a human body and a human soul, voluntary poverty, and holy obedience, and a chaste virginity. The Cross of Christ has stretched itself over a vast field, of which heathen morality never dreamed, and they who deny the merit of virginity leave out a portion of Christian morals. They who can believe that no real righteousness is infused into the Saint, will, of course, see no beauty in the virgin soul, though she be all glorious within, with the intense fire of love,

which the Holy Spirit has poured into her. The Cross has a philosophy of its own, which thwarts in unexpected directions the philosophy of the world. If Gilbert had ever heard of a certain Jovinian, he might have known that he was half a stoic, as well as wholly heretic ; because he could see no degrees in saintliness, neither could he discern that one vice was worse than another.[1] Again the deep philosopher who has set the bounds of the human intellect, which it cannot pass, he too has imagined a mysterious bound to the human will, and denies in his system the merit of holy virginity. So be it, but Christ has illumined the intellect with faith, and the will with charity, and there will ever be holy virgins in the Church in spite of transcendental philosophy. The seven nuns of Sempringham doubtless knew nothing of this philosophy; but they knew of our blessed Lord's words, promising eternal life to those who should give up father and mother, brethren and sisters, or wife, for His sake. The Church, by regulating monastic vows, only pointed out one way of doing what Christ prescribed in the general, and furnished her children with the means of gaining this blessing. The Bible says nothing about monks and nuns, but it says a great deal about prayer, and about taking up the cross. It is quite true that the cross has sanctified domestic affections, by raising marriage to a dignity which it never possessed before. And yet human affections are terrible things ; love is as strong and insatiable as death,[2] and how hard is it

[1] St. Aug. de Hær. 82, see the connection in St. Thomas Aq. contra gen. lib. iii. 189.

[2] Cant. viii.

to love, as though we loved not, and to weep, as though we wept not, and to laugh, as though we laughed not. Happy are they to whom human affections are not all joy ; the mother has her cross as well as the nun, and it will be blessed to her. Happy they who have to tend the sick-bed of a parent or a friend ; they need seek no further, they have their cross. Yet, happiest of all is she, who is marked out for ever from the world, whose slightest action assumes the character of adoration, because she is bound by a vow to her heavenly Spouse, as an earthly bride is bound by the nuptial vow to her earthly lord. Vows should only be made under the protection of a strong religious system, but when they can be taken, they whom God by His providence calls, as He often does, to lead a single life, are far happier in the peaceful cloister than in the world. Even though some may have mistaken their vocation, and it had been better to marry, yet their vows are a protection, and every Christian can, by God's grace, in any case live a virgin life. Terrible cases have occurred, as we may by-and-by see, of fallen nuns, but have fearful passions never broken out in the world ?

CHAPTER V

THE SPREAD OF THE INSTITUTE

WHEN the cloister was finished, and Alexander of Lincoln had blessed it, and received the profession of the nuns, Gilbert had done a great work. He had gained an object on which to spend his patrimony, and had saved seven souls from the troubles and dangers of the world. But he was still far from having done his work; the institute of his nuns was still rude and unformed, and it does not yet appear what rule they followed. It was about the year 1131 when first they quitted the world, and it was many years before the Order was fully formed, and the steps by which it grew are but scantily related by the chronicler of his life. First, it was a difficulty with him how his convent was to be supplied with necessaries. The sisters could not go out themselves, and butchers and bakers could not go to them. He first employed women who lived in the world to transmit to them what they wanted for their daily food. This was, however, but a clumsy contrivance, and contrary to the first rule of monastic discipline, that a convent should be perfect in itself, and entirely independent of the world around. The echoes of worldly news could not fail to find their way into the nun's cell, and to

call up images which ought to be banished from her heart. Earthly cares must often call to earth the mind of her who rules her husband's house, though these too are meritorious, if done to the glory of God; but the nun is continually to have her conversation in heaven, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. To effect this, the world must be diligently kept out of her heart; and the girls who went backwards and forwards, between market and the convent, were but too willing retailers of news. This was for a long time a difficulty with Gilbert; at length, one day, William, the first Abbot of Rievaux, passed through Sempringham, and paid its rector a visit. Gilbert had very probably never seen the white habit before, for the Cistercian reform had not long been introduced into England. From that moment he conceived a respect for the Cistercians, which never quitted him. He consulted William on his difficulties, and was advised by him to institute an Order of lay-sisters who were to help the choir-nuns, and to perform menial offices for them; in other words, they were to correspond to the lay-brethren of Citeaux. Gilbert took this advice, but he was too patient and too much accustomed to wait on the providence of God to introduce the change violently. The poor peasant girls whom he employed were too much accustomed to hard labour and coarse fare to find even conventual discipline hard, but there were habits of humility, obedience, and strict purity to be acquired, which could not be learned in a day. He called them before him, and explained to them what he required of them, with-

out abating a jot of the rigour of the discipline. The poor girls at first shrunk from the trial, but when he spoke to them from time to time of contempt of the world, of the giving up of their own will, and of the rewards of heaven, they first listened to him attentively, and then by degrees their hearts began to yield. It was far better for them to live in a convent, though they were under restraint, and they could not go out when they would, than to work all day long in the fields of a merciless task-master, and not be sure of earning a livelihood after all. The sound of the convent-bell would sweeten their toil, and kind and holy words console their hearts; besides, what was not least, they would be sure of being fed and clothed, and at last they determined to close with their pastor's proposal, and to give up the world. This, however, did not satisfy Gilbert, and he waited another year before he received their profession. He clothed them like the nuns, except that, instead of the ample cuculla and scapular of the nuns, the lay-sisters wore a black cloak, lined with white lamb's wool; the broad hood of their garment was made large enough to cover the shoulders, and to envelop the throat and bosom like the scapular of the nuns. The simple occupations of these poor peasant girls shows more than anything else how monastic discipline is only Christianity in its perfection, hallowing and taking up into itself the meanest relations of life. The lay-sister was to take the hard work in brewing and baking, in spinning and washing; if the nuns were otherwise engaged and did not come to help them, they were not to wait, but to begin

without them. They mended clothes and prepared the washing-tubs, and some of them ever attended in the kitchen, to chop up the vegetables, and to hand utensils to the nun who was cook for the week. In these offices, intermingled with psalmody and other spiritual exercises at stated hours, they passed their lives, and for the temporal things which they ministered the good nuns instructed them in the science of the Cross, and Gilbert himself assiduously trained them up, that their earthly toil might bring fruit in heaven.

But though women can help each other to bake and brew, they cannot plough and dig; and Gilbert soon found that he must needs procure labourers for the grounds attached to the nunnery. A convent of monks can support itself, but nuns, though they can do much alone, require men to labour for them. Again, in this difficulty, his friends of Citeaux helped him. He was in a greater strait than before; lay-sisters were comparatively easy to manage, especially in what was a nunnery already, but the rude rustic was a much more unmanageable creature, and most unpromising to reduce to monastic rule. But while he was deliberating, some monks of the Cistercian Order rode into his habitation, accompanied, as usual, by some lay-brethren. The whole equipage struck Gilbert, who had been used to the splendid train of Alexander of Lincoln. He at once seized the idea of the lay-brethren of the Order, and determined thus to imitate the Cistercians, by turning every farmhouse on his estates into something like a monastery, where, throughout all the appurtenances of cow-houses, stables, and barns, all

should be subject to religious discipline. He had already done a vast service to Sempringham; for how many poor women, whom poverty, and their defenceless condition, exposed to danger, had he safely housed in a religious house? He now was to do the same for the men; and in this case his mercy was extended even to a lower and more degraded class. Some whom he took were the churls from his own land, who were born on his demesne, and whom he had known and supported from their infancy; but others were of the lowest class in the land, runaway serfs,[1] whom now he freed, by taking them into religion; others again, were wayside beggars. From these poor creatures he made up his lay-brethren; he clothed them in the same rough garb as the Cistercian brethren, only that, besides the white tunic, they wore, under the outer cloak of hodden grey, a short mantle, lined with skins, reaching to the middle of the thigh, which, as it does not occur in the rule of Citeaux, was probably an English garment, better adapted to our inclement sky; over the head was drawn the Cistercian hood, covering the shoulders and the chest. These poor men were not taught to read, but they were taught humility, obedience, and the strictest purity, and were treated with a tenderness to which they had been utter strangers in the world. Instead of being ground down to the earth by a secular lord they were under the gentle rule of the Church, and their temporal and eternal

[1] A dominis suis transfugos, quos nomen religionis mancipavit. These may have been churls, and not serfs, but they were most probably the latter, for he seems to contrast them with his own famuli.

welfare was cared for. They had a chapter of their own, like monks, and services proportioned to their condition in life, and their spiritual director guided them in the narrow way which leads to everlasting life. Especially were they warned to beware of the Saxon vice of intoxication; and, above all, were they forbidden to set up the place "which, in Teutonic tongue, is called the tap." [1]

It is impossible to calculate how far the influence of such a community might spread among the peasantry throughout England, when there was established among them, and before their eyes, such an institute, where, for the love of God, brethren, who had been rude peasants like themselves, were serving religious women whom they had never seen, except in church, with their veils over their faces, though they had heard their voices mingling in the chant. On the accession of the lay-brethren to his family Gilbert's nunnery might be said to be now complete; all were hard at work in the community; in the granges around it the lay-brethren were distributed, each at work at his own occupation; in one corner was the blacksmith at his forge, in his black rochet, or scanty coat without sleeves;[2] and here was the carter,[3] with his horses shorn of the flowing honours of the mane and tail, that they might accord with monastic simplicity; in another place was the brother who had the charge of the whole grange, with the keys at his girdle, diligently searching for eggs, and storing up the honey, that all may be sent to the refectory of

[1] Vid. Gilbertine rule ap. Dugdale, vol. vi. p. 2, p. 65.
[2] Reg. Gilb. De frat. 1. [3] Ibid. 19.

the nunnery.[1] And this peaceful family went on in the stormy times when Stephen was battling for the crown, when, in the self-same county, Alexander, Bishop of Lincoln, was shorn of his three castles. Alarms of war were sounding about them; for it was near Lincoln that Stephen fought the battle where he was taken prisoner; and the great baron, Gilbert of Ghent, of whom was held the manor of Sempringham, shared the King's captivity.[2] Abbeys and monasteries were burning about them, and the Church, all over England, was in trouble; the See of York was vacant; Durham was in the hands of Comyn, and the Archbishop of Canterbury was in little favour with the king; and when he threatened to cross over the Alps, and appeal to the Pope, Stephen declared that he might find it no such easy matter to return. And yet, in the midst of all this trouble, the convent of Sempringham was holding its even course; in the darkest times there are ever some little nooks in the Church where there is peace.

Even Alexander, of Lincoln, found comfort in thinking on the parish church of Sempringham, and all that was going on about it. The death of his uncle, Roger, Bishop of Salisbury, apparently, by chagrin at the fall of his power, seems to have deeply affected him, and he determined to give to the nuns of Sempringham an island, called Haverholm, formed by some marshy ground, and the waters of a little river near Sleaford, the site of one of his unfortunate castles.[3] He had before

[1] Reg. Gilb. De frat. 1. [2] John of Hexham, in ann. 1142.

[3] Roger died in 1139, Hoveden, Script. post Bed. p. 277, and the foundation of Haverholm must have been about this time.

offered the ground to a colony of Cistercians, from Fountains, but even they, apparently, found it too wet, and removed to Louth Park. The Bishop gave it to the nuns, "for the soul of King Henry, and my uncle Roger, sometime Bishop of Salisbury."[1] The charter which contains Alexander's gift makes it plain that by this time the nuns had adopted a modified Cistercian rule; for it says of them that they follow "a strict life, a holy life; the life of the monks of Cistercian Order, as far as the weakness of their sex allows." This probably means that they adopted the unmitigated rule of St. Benedict. Their rules were afterwards drawn out definitely, and when this is noticed, it will appear more clearly what this meant. So much of the Cistercian rule consisted in manual labours, quite inapplicable to females, that the conformity of the life of Gilbert's nuns to the brethren of Citeaux must have been the austerity of their mode of life, and the use of meditation. The sisters of Sempringham, though they washed and spun, and brewed, yet, having been Gilbert's scholars, were learned maidens, in their way; for, when their numbers increased, it was found necessary to prohibit the speaking Latin amongst each other, which would, in fact, have divided the convent into the learned and un-

[1] In the year 1131, when we have placed the foundation of the nunnery, there were very few Cistercian abbeys in France; indeed, the Abbey of Tard, in the diocese of Langres, is the only one of which the foundation is certainly previous to that time. Juilly, it appears certain, was a Benedictine dependency on Molesme. It is, therefore, very unlikely that St. Gilbert should have begun so early to imitate the Cistercians. The idea must have struck him from his increasing intercourse with Cistercians.

learned sisters. They had, therefore, more facilities for spiritual reading, and for meditation, than were common; but for all that, it was a bold thing to apply the rule of St. Benedict to delicate females, in all the strictness in which St. Scholastica had learned it from the lips of her brother. Nunneries had degenerated both in England and France; in England they had not long ago been censured for their splendid robes and secular apparel;[1] and a very few years later, the Council of Rheims complained of the nuns, who lived irregularly, each on her own property, without even keeping within the precincts of the cloister.[1] In this respect, the good nuns, though they little suspected it, were reformers, when they were transported to their little island of St. Mary, of Haverholm, where they had nothing to look upon but their own green meadows and cultivated land, and beyond, the little river, running between its low banks, and the sluggish waters of the marsh, shutting them out from the world.

[1] Council of London, 1139. [2] Geroch. ap. Baluz. vol. i. 204.

CHAPTER VI

GILBERT IN FRANCE

It has taken but a short chapter to tell how, from 1131 to 1139, the Order, or rather the convent, of Sempringham was increasing, and that it had sent out a colony of nuns to Haverholm ; and it takes but a few words to say, that from the foundation of Haverholm to 1148, the fame of the sanctity of the nuns spread far and wide, and that their numbers still further increased, so that many noblemen gave lands to Gilbert, wishing to have a convent built near their own homes.[1] Many things may have occurred in these years of which we know nothing ; at all events, Gilbert was growing old all the while ; near twenty years are added to his life in that time. Many things must have happened to him and to his institute, but we need not regret the loss of them. The less that monks and nuns are heard of the better. They are the under-current in Church history ; they

[1] It does not appear what convents were founded at this time. Bullington is founded for nuns and clerks, and, therefore, was not built till after Gilbert's return from France. Catteley, which is placed by Dugdale in Stephen's time, as appears from the chart of foundation, was not founded till Henry's II.'s reign. Ormesby and Sixhill, the dates of which are unknown, may have been founded then, but the fact most probably is, that the lands were given, but the monasteries not founded, till after Gilbert had been to Clairvaux.

need not appear on the surface, though their action in the deep waters purifies the whole. They are, so to speak, the moving element in the Church, whose doctrine and hierarchy is one, and immovable; thus, they vary themselves, as the wants of the Church vary. They are the reformers of the Church, that is, of her children, when faith waxes cold; the pliant and elastic element, which takes a different shape, according to the Proteus form of sin, which it opposes. In the first fervour of their conversion they work some great work; they may afterwards degenerate, but the work is done, and by the time that they require reform, so, too, may the Church. But all their work is done in secret, by contemplation and prayer and penance; and whenever they make their appearance on the surface of society they portend a storm. It was a schism in the Church which called forth St. Bernard from his monastery, and now that Gilbert goes to visit the great Abbot of Clairvaux, the stormy part of his life is to begin. But what takes him so far from his home when, for so many years, he had remained in quiet at Sempringham? He must have been aroused indeed to undertake it. And so he was; what he had simply begun, for the sake of seven maidens, whose hearts God had filled with heavenly love, had now sprung up into an institute, which he could no longer manage alone. The very soul of the institute was spiritual guidance, and the sisters were now so numerous that he could not bear the burden by himself. His friends, the Cistercians, had stood him in good stead, and he determined to apply to them, and to beg of them to take the institution

into their hands. Events were taking place at Citeaux which made the year 1148 a favourable one for his request; and we will precede him, to take a glimpse of the state of things on the Continent.

And first, where has St. Bernard been all this while? he has had other work to do, since by God's grace, he restored unity to the Church and placed Innocent II. on the papal throne. Many events had taken place at Rome since that time; the turbulent nobles seem then to have been broken, and a republican element now appears to stir up that ever restless race. The cities of Northern Italy were aroused, and the dark storm from the Apennines rolled its way on to Rome; and this time it was guided by a man well fitted by his talents and his boldness to be the author of mischief. Arnold of Brescia rapidly saw the theory which would symbolise the new interests which thus stept into the conflict, and he had a fiery enthusiasm and eloquence which fitted him to be its herald. He saw that the power of the bishops was irksome to the citizens. All will recollect the part which Milan took against its archbishop, Landulfus, in the middle of the eleventh century, and how often the same scenes were renewed in that turbulent city. Arnold took up this feeling, and attacked the prelates, many of whom, as was the case so often in the empire, were secular princes as well as bishops. Not that, he said, the churches of these bishops are not the house of God, but the prelates themselves are not bishops, and the people should not obey them.[1] He inveighed in strong terms against the

[1] Geroch. ap. Gretser. vol. xii. Otto Frising. de Gest. Fred. ii. 21.

secularity of the clergy, which was but too palpable, and thus he was looked upon as a reformer. He asserted that the spiritual and secular power are so totally distinct, that they cannot possibly by any means be joined. This doctrine is very like the great truth, that the Kingdom of Christ is not of this world, that is, that the Church of Christ has a power of her own, totally independent of, and above any earthly jurisdiction ; and it has deceived many since Arnold's time. He appealed to the ancient feelings of the Italian republics, and made them fiercer by giving them a seemingly religious direction. His doctrines spread southward ; and though he himself was obliged to fly to France, yet they raised a sedition in Rome, and Innocent's last days were embittered by the news that the Romans had re-established the senate and revolted from his authority. In the time of Celestine, his successor, they deposed the Prefect of the city, an officer virtually appointed by the Pope, though nominally also by the Emperor : and established an officer whom they called a patrician, probably from some notion which they had of the connection of the title with the time of the Eastern empire. A more terrible event soon followed ; Lucius, the successor of Celestine, died from a wound received in attempting to quell an insurrection, and thus the blood of a successor of St. Peter, lay at the door of this infatuated and degraded people. It was at this time, that the mock senate of Rome determined to claim the right of assenting to the nomination of the Supreme Pontiff, in other words, as the representative of the people, it wished to restore the election

to what it was before Innocent II.'s time.[1] The cardinals were aware of this, and suddenly and hastily they met to elect the successor of St. Peter. The choice which they made astonished Christendom, when it was announced that they had elected Bernard, Abbot of St. Anastasius, a Cistercian convent near Rome, a man of blameless life and gentle manners, but apparently of little talents, and above all, not a member of the college of cardinals. They seem, in their alarm at the dreadful event which had just happened, to have determined on electing one not of their own body, for it was the rule of an ecclesiastical aristocracy that the Romans hated, and they pitched in their fright on the first eligible person of whom they could think. The finger of God was not the less observable in the whole transaction, for Eugenius III. had been a monk of Clairvaux, and St. Bernard's influence began at once to be felt in the Church. The pontificate of Eugenius was an epoch in the Church; he came just before the age of rescripts, and appeals, and canonists;[2] and the broad principles laid down by St. Bernard of course influenced the practice of the papal courts, and, therefore, tended to modify the doctrine concerning appeals as laid down by Alexander III. Again, secular prelates soon began to feel a new influence in the court of Rome, proof against riches and magnificence.[3] The cardinals them-

[1] Vid. Life of St. Stephen Harding, in vol. i. p. 198.

[2] On the law of rescripts, see appendix to the third Lateran Council ap. Mansi, p. xxxi. As to appeals, ibid. p. x. and compare. St. Bern. de Cons. lib. iii. c. 2. The canon law is said to have been compiled by Gratian, about A.D. 1150.

[3] John of Salisbury bears witness to the purity of Eugenius's administration.—Vid. Ciacconi, Vit. Eug. III.

selves were not slow in complaining of Gallican influence, and had it not been for St. Bernard's meekness, a schism might have separated France from Italy.[1] His election, however, was unanimous; out of his Abbey they fetched this lowly and shame-faced monk, who had washed the dishes at Clairvaux; they took the spade and the reaping-hook out of his hand, and put the scarlet mantle over his white Cistercian habit, and in solemn procession enthroned him in the Lateran. All at once a change came over this simple monk; an unflinching firmness appeared in the sweet-mannered brother, who, not long before, had found his Abbey of St. Anastasius too much for his sick soul, and had longed for the forest and the cavern; he even showed a talent for business, which none had seen before his mysterious elevation. This, too, was totally apart from the influence of the Abbot of Clairvaux. St. Bernard's soul sunk within him at the news. "God forgive you, what have ye done?" he writes to the cardinals. "Had ye no wise and practical men among you that ye have elevated a man in a pauper's garb? It is either an absurdity or a miracle." He knew well the poor brother of Clairvaux, and thought him totally unfit to sit in St. Peter's chair. He, therefore, did not even write to him till urged to do so by his friends. Eugenius had need of all the qualities which now appeared in him; Arnold of Brescia was in Rome, now clad in monkish garb and fresh from the

[1] St. Bernard's letter to the cardinals on Eugenius's election, shows a doubt how far they would support him. For the discontent of the cardinals, v. Otto Frisin. de Gest. Frid. i. 57.

lessons of Abelard; seditions were raised and cardinals' palaces burnt, not now by the nobles, for the Frangipani[1] were now on the Pope's side, but by the populace. The fiery monk had dazzled them with visions of old Rome, and they had dreams of the Senate, the Equestrian Order, and the Capitol. Here was the old secular empire springing up in a grotesque form; a wild mixture of the Gracchi, Julius Cæsar, and Constantine.[2] Added to this, the germs of those miserable revolutions of which the Emperor Frederick afterwards took advantage, were desolating the north of Italy; and an impatience of ecclesiastical rule had sprung up, which now broke out in the open maltreatment of bishops and archbishops in the north, just as the cardinals had suffered at Rome.[3] Eugenius pacified the north of Italy, but Rome was as yet beyond his power; he was ultimately obliged to cross the Alps.

It was during this journey that Gilbert saw his holiness, and was brought in contact with a series of events which would look like romance, if history did not assure us of their truth. They are the outbursts of the young life of a Christian people, before scepticism had touched the purity of their faith; while at the same time there come across us outbursts of wickedness at times almost ludicrous in its waywardness, and at other times terrible from its marring the good which God had prepared for Christendom. But most wonderful of all are they

[1] Otto Frisin. de Gest. Frid. i. 28.
[2] Vid. Letter of the Roman people to Conrad.—Otto Frisin. Ibid.
[3] Pet. Ven. Ep. iv. 37.

from the predominant influence of St. Bernard, whom God had raised up to guide His Church amidst the dangers which surrounded her. It is refreshing to see a man, in a poor habit, riding at the side of kings and emperors, and guiding all things, simply because he is Christ's servant. At the time that Eugenius entered France, Louis was about to set out on the crusade which had been undertaken on the alarming news of the taking of Edessa. A great Parliament[1] had been held at Etampes to elect the regent during the King's absence; St. Bernard was in the midst of the circle of bishops and barons, and when their deliberations were over, he came forward at the head of them, and said to the king, "Behold, here are thy two swords." The one was the great Suger, the other the Count of Nevers. Both refused the office; the Count fled away and took the vows in a Carthusian monastery, but Suger was persuaded by St. Bernard to accept the charge. This event alone tended more than any other to consolidate the French monarchy, and prepare the way for Philip Augustus and St. Louis. This was on Septuagesima Sunday; a little before Easter, Louis went to meet Eugenius at Dijon. When the royal procession approached, those around Eugenius cried out, "The King, the King;" but Eugenius sat unmoved, and when Louis came near with his train of nobles, he leaped off his horse and kissed the Pope's foot with tears of joy, thus doing homage to Christ in the person of his earthly representative.

[1] Magnum colloquium.

Then Eugenius raised him up and embraced him. Strange times were these, when religion was thus honoured, and St. Mary's prophecy had come to pass, and the strong things of the world had fallen down before the weak. It was this that passed through the mind of Eugenius when he embraced Louis, and remembered his own lowly origin, and said, that God indeed had raised the simple out of the mire, reminding the king also, that he, a monk of Clairvaux, had worked in the kitchen with Henry of France, Louis's brother. And yet, the times had their strange caprices too, for not long after, when the Pope went to celebrate in solemn procession at St. Genevieve, the attendants of the canons quarrelled with those of the Pope, and they fought with their fists with such fury, that even King Louis, in attempting to separate the combatants, suffered in the fray.[1] On Easter day, in the Abbey of St. Denis, in the presence of Eugenius, Louis received the Oriflamme from the altar ; all the great barons of the realm were about him, and all the chivalry of France, with the Knight-templars in their white cloaks, and all wore the cross to show that they were on their way to rescue the Holy Sepulchre. This was a day of joy, but alas ! how few of that brilliant array ever saw again the shores of France. By the side of Louis sat his lovely and fascinating queen, with all her damsels around her ; it had been well if she had been left behind, for God, on account of the sins of the host, would not allow them to rescue the Holy City. This, however, none could foresee on that happy Easter day.

[1] Baronius in ann. 1147.

After their departure, St. Bernard had other work to do; and let not the reader be impatient to meet Gilbert at Citeaux. The delay will enable him the better to understand the course of events. That sect which afterwards became the Albigenses, and in that form threatened to undermine the whole Church, had attracted the vigilant eye of Eugenius. As it first appears to us, it takes the simple shape of an inveterate hatred of all mystery, with an especial dislike of churchmen, and church authority. Its apostle was a runaway monk called Henry, a sort of impure and inferior Arnold of Brescia. Peter[1] the Venerable considered the heresy to have come from among the wild and ignorant inhabitants of the Alpine valleys; but he soon found to his wonder that it had spread into the fair plains of Provence. There, in this luxurious and half-Moorish country, it met another element, a subtle Manicheism, and this compound of vice, disobedience, and error, was the Albigensian heresy.[2] The licentious soldiery[3] cared but little for theological disputes, but understood too well the value of license not to profess themselves Henricians; and the infatuated people burned crucifixes, profaned the churches, flogged priests, and imprisoned monks, or compelled them to marry. The only way in which this terrible and

[1] Pet. Ven. contr. Petrob. bibl. Clun. p. 1122.

[2] St. Bernard, In Cant. Serm. 66, connects a similar set of heretics with the Manichees from the similarity of their doctrines, though ignorant of their historical origin. Evervinus, in his letter to the Saint, distinguishes two sets of heretics, one much more doctrinal than the other.—Vid. St. Bern. ed. Ben. vol. i. 1489.

[3] Ep. Goffr. ap. S. Bernardi op. ed. Ben. vol. ii. p. 1195.

spreading evil could be met, was by sending missionaries to preach in this centre itself of heresy. St. Bernard himself was sent with Alberic, Cardinal Bishop of Ostia. The Cardinal preceded him, and arrived at Albi, the stronghold of the heretics, two days before him; but the people had but little reverence for cardinals and legates of the Holy See; a short distance from the city, Alberic was met by a quaint procession of men mounted on asses, and women playing on cymbals; and when the bells of the church rung for mass, not thirty of the faithful attended. When St. Bernard arrived, the city poured out of the gates to meet him; the countenance and figure of the Saint struck them at once, and the fickle people received him with shouts of joy. But St. Bernard looked upon them sternly, and they saw no more of him that day. The morrow was the feast of St. Peter, and the great church was crowded with people, so that some of them were compelled to stand outside the porch. St. Bernard looked around on the upturned visages beneath, and said, "I had come to sow good seed, but I find the ground already sown with corrupt seed. But now will I detail to you each kind of seed, see ye which ye will have." He then drew out the Catholic faith side by side with that of Henry. There was no need of premise and conclusion; arguments would have been thrown away on the people of Albi. The juxtaposition was enough; a thrill ran through the whole assembly, and when St. Bernard asked them which seed they would choose, the hearts of the people were already won back to the Church. "Do penance then," said the

holy Abbot, "as many of you as are polluted, and return to the unity of the Church of Christ:" and he bade them hold up their hands in token of Catholic unity; and all with joy raised up their right hands to heaven. And this, says the faithful monk, who was an eye-witness of this scene, in his letter written to Clairvaux, is to be preferred to all his other miracles. He went everywhere from place to place preaching the Word of God, and before he had left the country, heresy had everywhere fled before his face. He afterwards addressed them letters full of tenderness, and the remembrance of his visit for some time kept heresy under. If this corrupt people had continued to remember the good abbot who had ventured among them in their wildest mood, how much blood and misery would have been spared; but at all events, St. Bernard stopped for a time this miserable evil, which afterwards threatened the very existence of Christendom. Alas! a few favourable circumstances, a corrupt court and a corrupt clergy, and the old and mysterious Manicheism of the country, produced an open heresy in the south of France, but there were all over Europe, men who hated the Church because she came across their plans or their vices, and who took advantage of the cowardice or worldliness of churchmen to oppress her; and so it ever will be till the end of time. But God raises up His Saints to the help of His Bride, and it is pleasing amidst the melancholy picture, to follow the steps of such a man as St. Bernard.

We are now fast approaching Citeaux, where we are again to meet Gilbert, and where he is to

meet St. Bernard and Pope Eugenius. St. Bernard probably left the south of France in the autumn of 1147; soon after which Eugenius determined to visit again the scenes in which he had passed the happiest days of life. The general chapter of Citeaux took place as usual on the 14th of September. Hither also came Gilbert, after so many years, in which he hardly crossed the bounds of the parish of Sempringham; he now found himself in the midst of the most august assembly in Christendom, in the company of the first men of the day.[1] More than three hundred abbots of the Cistercian Order were sitting around, with the head of Christendom in the midst. St. Stephen had long since been gathered to his rest, and his successor, Rainaldus, presided over the chapter. St. Bernard was there now in the decline of life, with an enfeebled body and an untired soul, the centre of the affairs not only of the Order, but of the whole of the Christian world. He indeed was unconscious, except when at times it came across him, that men did think a great deal of him, and it puzzled him much, "for how could so many great men be wrong?" and yet it was true that he

[1] There seems every reason to suppose that this chapter at Citeaux was in 1147. It appears from a document quoted in Pagi's notes to Baronius, tom. xix. p. 4, that he was there on the 18th of that month; and he could not have been there again next year, as Pagi and Muratori suppose, because he had left France in June, and the chapter was always in September. Again, Goffridus, in his life of St. Bernard, seems to imply, that it was in the same year that he entered France, cum introiset Gallias—eodem anno apud Cistercium affuit. Vit. S. Bern. iv. 7. His visit to Clairvaux, however, took place next year, for it is expressly stated to have been after the Council of Rheims. Ibid. ii. 8.

was an unprofitable servant.[1] Thus he spoke to his friends in private, and there he was with all eyes upon him, yet too much intent on God to know it. Gilbert was not the only stranger who came with his petition; for another comes with a similar request. He is a man of quaint figure and uncomely features: his stature is short, and his plain face is furrowed everywhere with deep wrinkles.[2] When he smiles, he twists his body and raises his shoulders up to his head in a strange way; but his eyes are piercing, and seem to look through those who speak with him; and altogether his face was not unpleasing, for, though emaciated and hard-featured from exposure to the air, the countenance had a strange mixture of sweetness and sternness. This was Stephen, who had lately established a double monastery at Obazina, in the diocese of Limoges, not far from Tulles. It was a wild glen, through which ran a small stream, and all around it was a thick wood, and high rocks, through which flowed a larger stream, called Courreze; the monastery itself was built on a jutting rock, round the base of which rolled the clear waters of the rapid river. It was a rough place, and yet the abbot externally was as rough a man. His discipline was stern; if one of the novices but dropped his book, he received a box on the ear, which sounded through the church. One Saturday evening, the monks who had had charge of the bakehouse, after compline, when all were in bed, felt so happy that their week was over, that they became unusually merry. They

[1] Vit. St. Bern. v. 12. [2] Baluz. Misc. vol. i. p. 169.

were tilting at each other with sticks, and amusing themselves, when all of a sudden they espied the dark figure of the abbot, who had come up unawares, and had been watching their proceedings. The poor monks immediately took to flight, knowing well what a severe punishment would ensue, and next day they took care to accuse themselves of this fault before another rose to be beforehand with them, and Stephen seeing their fright by their pale faces and haggard countenances, saw that they had already suffered enough, and excused them. And yet Stephen had a gentle heart; he wept with those whom he saw were frightened at his severe discipline, and would not allow them to pine away. The nobles of the country were cruel and tyrannical, men who oppressed the poor, and before these steel-clad ruffians would Stephen stand in his coarse black habit, in behalf of the wretched. Once a whole country-side was desolated by a baron, because another noble, to whom the ground belonged, had made away with a favourite hawk; Stephen goes to the baron, and promises to find the hawk if he will but go away in peace. Then Stephen set out in the depth of winter, on foot, to the nobleman's castle, and when he got there, was refused admittance, as might have been expected; then he trudged back in the snow, discouraged, but not in despair. He soon set out again in the same quest, and by God's help, he was at this time successful, and he came back with the beautiful hawk upon his wrist, and restored it to its owner. At another time when a fearful insurrection of the peasantry against their lords left the fields uncultivated, and a famine

ensued, he fed thousands at the gates of the abbey. He now came to put his monastery under the Cistercian rule; his fame had come before him, and Pope Eugenius himself presented him to the lord Abbot of Citeaux, and Rainaldus in turn presented him to the Chapter, with an eulogium, which was very complimentary to his piety, but by no means so to his personal appearance. He took him by the hand, and said, "See my lords and brethren, here is an abbot, little in body, short in stature, contemptible in garb, ugly in face; but, whatever there is of him, be assured is full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith." He then named his request, and the Pope's recommendation to the abbots; at first they murmured, for it was against the rule of the Order to receive a community of women. But when Rainaldus promised that this should be remedied, they could not refuse a request, backed by the Pope's authority, and the monastery of Obazina was received into the filiation of Citeaux. The Cistercians were right in accepting the rule of this monastery, for they improved it by their government. It partook of the rude and almost humorous simplicity of Stephen himself. The poor nuns in their simplicity, when they looked on their glen and the rocky mountains which bounded it, believed that all the world with its cities and magnificent towns lay just outside the woody mountain tops. Boys under five years old were brought up in the convent of the nuns, and were then removed into that of the monks. As one little boy was crossing, under the guidance of a monk, the steep path between the two monasteries, the brother asked him how he

liked the women with whom he had been living. "Women!" said the child; "I have never seen any women. Those with whom I have been living were called sisters." And this child was a type of the rude simplicity and unreasoning purity of the monasteries now delivered into the hands of Citeaux.

So far Gilbert's mission seemed to prosper; a double monastery had been received into the order of Citeaux. He had an audience of Pope Eugenius, and laid his case before him. The Pope was much interested in him; he wanted news from England, for the Church was in a miserable state in a country torn with civil war, in which churches and abbeys were turned into fortresses, and the clergy were mercilessly laid under contributions. What was worse, the bishops themselves had but too often turned soldiers, and with their armed bands harried the poor peasants, and plundered the fruit of their lands. The Bishop of Hereford alone is praised as being a courageous defender of the Church's rites. Besides all this, the conduct of Stephen gave Eugenius much cause for alarm. He and his uncle, Henry of Winchester, were in no good odour at Rome, since the new order of things under the rule of Eugenius.[1] The Pope had therefore deprived Henry of the legatine office, and had transferred it to Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury. St. Bernard was evidently aiming at purifying the English Church of secular prelates. But a short time before, at Paris, he had procured the dēposition from the See of York of Stephen's nephew and nominee, the same to whom God afterwards gave

[1] John of Hexham, in ann. 1147.

grace to become St. William. All this made the presence of Gilbert most interesting to Eugenius, and he soon learned to love his simplicity and quiet energy. When, however, Gilbert talked to him about giving up the conduct of his Order to the Cistercians, he found him and the chapter decidedly averse to it. The Order would not undertake the government of a female convent. In the case of Obazina, it was possible to separate them, but at Sempringham, the very object of the institute was the spiritual direction of nunneries, and the one could not exist without the other. The chapter therefore altogether declined Gilbert's offer. This was a sad disappointment to him, for the anxious charge was still upon his shoulders, and he knew not how to bear it. The only thing to be done was to associate other priests with him in the government of the nunnery. He did not yet go back to Sempringham ; the events of this year of his life are obscurely told, but it appears incidentally that he remained in France the greater part of the year 1148.[1] His charge was now becoming more anxious than ever, and he probably remained behind to learn the rule of the canons of St. Augustine, for he now determined to join to each convent of his order a certain number of canons, who were to be the spiritual guides of the nuns.[2] At this time in Burgundy, in the same province as Citeaux,

[1] He was at the general chapter of Citeaux, in September 1147, and he was also at Clairvaux, when St. Malachi arrived four or five days before St. Luke's day, 1148. He may indeed have gone back to England, and made another journey to France, but his biographer only mentions one journey.

[2] Geroch. ap. Baluz. Misc. ii. 207.

the canons of St. Maurice had been reformed; again, instead of the turbulent secular canons of St. Genevieve, those of St. Victor were gradually substituted; and the year before, in his journey to Toulouse, St. Bernard had, by his burning words, converted the unruly clerks of the cathedral of Bordeaux, who for seven years had undergone the sentence of excommunication rather than become canons regular.[1] And much need had the cathedrals of reform, for in many places the old discipline had gone out, and the canons were living as they pleased, in houses of their own, having entirely given up the old monastic principle; and they boldly maintained that the rule of Aix-la-Chapelle had tacitly allowed this disorder.[2] But a general feeling was growing up against this practice, and Eugenius therefore warmly approved of Gilbert's plan. These were happy days for Gilbert, which he spent with St. Bernard, who loved him well. Eugenius too loved him, and said, that if he had but known him before, he would have nominated him to the See of York. This was a fortunate escape for Gilbert, for often must Henry Murdach have regretted the cloister of Fountains, after he had been consecrated by the hands of the Pope himself at Treves. His pallium hung heavy about his neck, when he found himself opposed to Stephen and his son Eustace, petulant, so thought Cardinal Gregory,[3] as the goat, without

[1] Goff. Epist. vit. St. Bern. lib. vi. ad fin.

[2] Geroch. p. 223. This must be what the author means by the rule of King Louis.

[3] St. Thomas, Ep. 4. 14.

the nobleness of the lion. Gilbert found that he had weight enough to bear in the rule of his own Order, for which he was now preparing, and which Pope Eugenius formally conferred upon him before he left France. Probably Gilbert was at Clairvaux, when Eugenius, on his way back to turbulent Italy, came to take a last look at that place where he had first known peace, and had spent so many happy days. He must needs see St. Bernard and Clairvaux, before he again crossed the Alps, never to see them more. As he wound along with his suite, the narrowing valley, where he had so often borne the heat and cold as a common labourer, the great bell of the abbey rung, and all the brethren assembled in the choir ; then the whole convent came out to meet him, St. Bernard first, with his pastoral staff, and the novices last, two and two. Then when he came to the abbey gates, all knelt before him, and when they rose, St. Bernard gave him holy water, and kissed his hand, and then with chanting, all passed into the abbey. Eugenius wept abundantly, and when he spoke to the monks, telling them that he was their fellow and brother, his words were broken by sobs. He wore the white cuculla day and night, as the rule prescribed, and under the rich purple hangings and embroidered coverlet of his bed, was the common straw pallet of the Order. His suite was too large to allow him to remain long at Clairvaux, and with a sad heart he set out again to cross the Alps.

Before he left Clairvaux, Gilbert saw another illustrious personage. This was St. Malachi ; he came all the way from the north of Ireland, hoping

to see Eugenius at Clairvaux, but when he arrived, five days before the feast of St. Luke, he found that the Pope had gone away, and was even then not far from Rome. King Stephen had detained him, with his usual obstinacy; he was afraid of Rome, and would not suffer any bishop to cross the sea to the Council of Rheims. The Archbishop of Canterbury alone contrived to cross the Channel in a crazy vessel, but when he returned from France, Stephen drove him into exile, and could only be brought to reason by laying an interdict on his lands. It was a part of this quarrel which prevented St. Malachi from reaching Clairvaux in time to see the Pope, then on the point of leaving France. His had been a long and a weary life, for he had been the reformer of the Irish church. With a handful of brethren he had renewed the old monastery of Benchor, and had built up a church of wood, which St. Bernard calls "a work of the Scots, and handsome enough." He had had hard work among wild Irish chieftains and their clans; once he narrowly escaped martyrdom; their savage eyes glared at him for a moment, but his presence disarmed them, and he, who was to give the signal, durst not do it. His was the most unruly diocese in Christendom; it had been for nine generations an appanage of a chieftain's family; eight had successively borne the title and swayed the power of the Metropolitan See, being all the while no more than laymen. The last archbishop was a married man, but he was really consecrated, and on his deathbed, by his wife, he sent his crosier to St. Malachi. He left him an heritage of toil; on foot, with a few clerks, he

braved the bitter cold, the deep bogs, and the rough roads of his country; and what was far worse, he battled with his half-heathen countrymen. He had to put down savage customs, unbridled concubinage, and lawless men chafing sorely at an ecclesiastical yoke. The first stone church which the Saint built raised an outburst of barbarian fury; they said that their bishop had turned Frenchman, and had ceased to be a true-hearted Scot, with his new-fangled architecture.[1] At length he had seen the fruits of his toilsome life; Church and State had been reformed by him; the civil law had taken the place of savage customs; churches were rebuilt, and priests ordained; confirmation was administered, and matrimony enforced. Innocent II. had delayed giving him the pall of an archbishop on account of some informality; but to make amends he took his mitre off his own head and put it upon the head of St. Malachi. He had now come to Clairvaux to receive the pall from the hands of Eugenius. Some of his clergy had accompanied him down to the sea-shore, and made him promise to come back to Ireland, and had watched him with straining eyes embark on board his vessel. He did fulfil his promise, for contrary winds drove him back to Ireland, but they never saw his face again. He had always wished to die at Clairvaux, in the arms of his friend St. Bernard, and now he was to have his wish, for the days in which Gilbert was with him were the last that he spent upon earth. St. Bernard vividly describes the joy of this inter-

[1] Gallus non Scotus. St. Bern. Vit. St. Malachiæ. St. Bernard calls him only bishop, because he had not received the pallium.

course. "How joyous a holiday dawned upon us when he came into Clairvaux! With how quick and bounding a step, did I, though infirm and trembling, run to meet him! With what joy did I rush to kiss him! With what joyful arms did I embrace this grace sent me from heaven! And then what joyful days did I pass with him, and yet how few!" It was in these last days that Gilbert saw him, and he was admitted to a familiar intercourse with these great Saints. He was not however present at the closing scene of the life of St. Malachi. It was now high time that he should return home; and at the latter end of October, he set out to go back to Sempringham. Both St. Bernard and St. Malachi loved him well;[1] each of them gave him his staff, that he might take a memorial of them back to England; and St. Bernard gave him a stole and a maniple. He went on his way to the work which had been appointed for him; there was still a great deal for him to do on earth; but on the second of November, All Souls' Day, St. Malachi died, and was buried in St. Mary's Chapel at Clairvaux.

[1] Gilbert's biographer says, that he alone was present when the two Saints, by their prayers, worked a miracle, but what it was is unknown.

CHAPTER VII

THE CANONS OF SEMPRINGHAM

THERE were many persons ready to welcome Gilbert when he got back to England; all who, before he went to France, were anxious to give portions of ground to endow a monastery of his institute, were more than ever disposed to assist him now that St. Bernard's name was added to his own.[1] In the two years after his return he must have been wholly occupied in founding houses of his Order; Alexander of Lincoln died before he left England, but Robert de Chesney, his successor, was blamed by his historian for injuring the revenues of his diocese by his liberality to the Order of Sempringham, so much did he love Gilbert and his institute.[2] Nay, when Chicksand had been founded by the Countess of Albemarle for the Gilbertines, and she was living there with her nuns, news was brought her that her son was dead, and that his kinsmen, without consulting her, were bearing his body to Walden Priory. In her frantic grief she ordered a band of armed men to bring the body by force to her, at

[1] Innocent III., in a Bull of Confirmation addressed to the Priory of Alvingham, says, that the Order was instituted by "the holy Gilbert and the blessed Bernard."—Monast. Angl. vii. 961.

[2] Wharton, Ang. Sac. ii. 417.

Chicksand, that it might lie in the church of the nuns; and had not the knights who accompanied the body ridden by the side of the coffin with drawn swords, it would have been carried away. The enthusiasm for the Gilbertine Order spread beyond Lincolnshire, and the immediate neighbourhood of Sempringham, into Yorkshire, where two houses were founded in 1150, Watton and Malton. The first priory founded was that of Sempringham itself; and Gilbert of Ghent gave the land on which the house was built.[1] "The nobles of England," says his biographer, "earls and barons, seeing and approving the work of the Lord, gave to the holy father Gilbert many lands and possessions; first in so doing was Alexander, Bishop of Lincoln, and lastly, King Henry II." Many of these monasteries were situated in Lincolnshire, in solitary islands formed by rivers, and among the reeds and willows of the marshy grounds. Gilbert's name was known all over England; he appears in the chronicles of the time side by side with kings and princes. William of Newbridge mentions him as a man "really wonderful, and of singular skill in the direction of females, conscious of his own purity, and relying on grace from on high," and his name was mentioned with reverence in the holiest cloisters. St. Aelred preached of him to his monks, and called him "the holy father Gilbert, a man venerable and to be mentioned with the highest honour."[2] The

[1] Gilbert did not give the land free of service; his descendant, another Gilbert, gave it in eleemosynam, *i.e.* free ecclesiastical tenure. For an explanation of the term see Constitutions of Clarendon, c. 9, where it is opposed to laicus feudus.

[2] St. Aelred, Sermon 2, in Isaiæ cap. xiv.

contemporaries of Gilbert must have been conscious of some substantial benefit derived from him, who was to all appearance only a retiring and simple parish priest; for many years after he came back from France he was not even a monk, and had not received the habit at the time of which we are writing. And this reverence is the more remarkable, because it continued after his death, soon after which his Order degenerated; nay, it showed the germs of this degeneracy even in his lifetime. Now that the institute has, by the addition of the canons, attained its perfection, it will be right to give a more minute account of it. We shall then see what was the benefit which the world owed to Gilbert, notwithstanding the partial failure of his work.

The peculiarity of the Order consisted in the institution of a certain number of canons to be the spiritual guides of nuns. Among the Premonstrants there were nuns as well as canons, but then the nuns were an after-thought; while in the case of the White Gilbertines, as they were called, the original institute began with the religious women, and all the rest grew up around them, and were established for their use. In Gilbert's original intention, every house of nuns was to have seven canons connected with it, who were to be the directors of the nuns; so that every Gilbertine priory consisted in fact of three monasteries, one for nuns, another of canons, and a third of lay-brethren. This mode of government had, in a manner, been forced upon him since the Cistercians refused to help him. The great problem in mon-

astic government was the jurisdiction to which they were to submit. This was met, as has been said elsewhere, by the formation of congregations, first the Cluniac, and then the Cistercian.[1] If this was necessary in the case of monks, it was much more indispensable in nunneries. A convent of women is necessarily dependent on men for the administration of the sacraments ; they must, therefore, necessarily be under external direction ; and in the choice of it should not be left to their own caprice. The want of external discipline had ruined many a nunnery. A number of houses were to be found, the inmates of which, calling themselves Canonesses, could give very little account of themselves, and were really relaxed nuns of the Order of St. Benedict.[2] As late as the twelfth century Councils were forced to take notice of nuns who wore rich furs, of sables, martens, and ermine, whose fingers were covered with rings of gold, and their long tresses curled or platted ; another speaks of disorderly nuns, who, while they ought to sleep and take their meals together in a dormitory and refectory, lived each in their own house without any restraint, and receiving whom she would.[3] Such nunneries as these were really nothing more than alms-houses for unmarried women. The idea of the Gilbertine Order was to obviate this difficulty, by joining to the nunneries an order of canons for the spiritual direction of the nuns.

[1] Life of St. Stephen, p. 155.

[2] Helyot, Ordres Mon. vol. ii. p. 58.

[3] Council of London, 1139, second Lateran Council. Vid. Geroch. quoted above, p. 59, and Council of Rheims.

Females require direction in a different way from men. It is the unruly intellect of man which leads him into error, while a woman errs from disorganised affections and untamed feelings; and, what is most pitiable to think upon, often those who aim highest, have the most terrible and signal fall. She who moves along the beaten path of life without being either very good or very bad, is in little danger of fanaticism; while she who is placed above ordinary ties and affections, and strives to fix her desires on God alone, finds at once a class of temptations of which others have no conception. The devil placed before our Lord temptations so subtle that we can hardly tell the meaning of them, or discover how it would have been sin to yield to them. Again, in the unfathomable mystery of those words, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" spoken upon the cross by Him who was Very God, it is possible to gather that the soul, most closely united to God, may be deprived of the consciousness of His presence in an incomprehensible way. All these are temptations, pressing upon the highest souls, of a kind quite different from those which beset the path of commonplace Christians. And to withstand these it requires an implicit faith, and an utter resignation of the will, which very few possess. Hence, the wild and terrible forms of fanaticism which have appeared from time to time in persons who, with proper guidance, might have been Sisters of Charity or contemplative nuns. On the other hand, by the sweet and gentle ways of holy obedience, a character is formed of a nature distinct from

any other, and which no austerities can alone bestow. Of course, God in His mercy can guide peaceful and holy souls through any difficulties, even without these aids, but it is dangerous to be without them, for who can stand in the hour of trial when it comes across the soul that after all she may be contemplating herself instead of God, and all her feelings may be illusion? A gentle voice is needed to bid the soul wait in darkness till God give her light, as He assuredly will do, sooner or later.

On the other hand, corresponding to these trials, there are joys in contemplation which ordinary souls cannot know. They are described by those who have felt them with a substantive clearness, which shows even to those who have never felt them, that there is a deep philosophy in the cross which simple and crucified souls can know, but which is beyond the reach of the mere student, however learned he may be. We are so tied down to things of sense that we can only aim at immaterial and invisible things through sensible objects; spiritual things can only be discerned by spirit, and therefore can but be understood by us indirectly, till our bodies, after the blessed resurrection, become spiritual. But it is possible to conceive that there is a way of seeing the invisible, analogous to, and yet totally distinct in kind from, the perceptions of sense; and for a short time, and in a small degree, God has vouchsafed such an opening of the invisible world to His Saints on earth. Few, indeed, there are, to whom such a grace is given, but there are many states short of

this to which more ordinary souls may attain, remembering, all the while, that of the highest, as well as the lowest, charity is the essence, and that which alone gives them value. Obedience to authority, which comes to us in the place of God, and humility, are the steps by which the Holy Spirit thus exalts souls dead to the world and to themselves. It was to produce in the soul these virtues that the Gilbertine canons were instituted, and what were the general results of the system may be gathered from one case which is confessedly an extraordinary one. "In one of the monasteries," says St. Aelred, "which, under the venerable Father Gilbert, are daily sending up to heaven plentiful fruits of chastity, there was once, and perhaps may be still, a holy virgin, and she had so expelled from her breast all love of the world and carnal affections, all care for bodily wants and outward anxiety, that with a burning soul she loathed earthly things, and longed after heavenly. And sometimes it happened, that when her mind was occupied in her wonted prayer, a mysterious and wondrous sweetness would come over her and put an end to all the movements of the soul, to all quick-coming thoughts, nay, even all those spiritual thoughts which concerned her friends. Then her soul, in a manner bidding adieu to all worldly burdens, would be rapt above itself; it would be caught up by a strange ineffable and incomprehensible light, so that it saw nothing else but That which is, and which is the being of all. Nor was this a bodily light or any likeness of a bodily thing; it was not extended nor shed abroad,

so that it could be seen everywhere; without being contained itself, it contained all things, and that in a wonderful and ineffable manner, just as Being contains all that is, and truth whatever is true. When, therefore, this light was shed around her, then she began to know Christ no longer after the flesh, for the breath of her nostrils, Christ Jesus, had led her into the truth itself. After lying a considerable time in this trance, the sisters could only with difficulty bring her back to her bodily senses, by shaking her. This happened several times, and they entreated her to explain what took place in these trances. Then began the others to long to attain to the height of this vision: wherefore, they strove to withdraw their minds from all worldly cares and anxieties; and by tears and continued prayers many obtained the same grace, so that among the sisters, many were, even against their will, plunged into this light. There was there in the convent a nun of consummate good sense, and she, knowing that it is not right to trust to every spirit, thought that this state was to be attributed to disease or fantastic illusions, and as much as she could, tried to dissuade the sisters from having these visions frequently. One day she asked the Superioress why no such thing happened to herself, and she received for answer, 'Because thou dost not believe us, nor love in others that virtue which thou hast not thyself.' Then the nun answered, 'Do thou pray to God for me, that if this be from Him, the same thing may happen to me.' And when they had prayed for some days to no purpose, she asked the same question of the Superioress, who

answered,' Thou must renounce all the things of this world, and affections for every mortal, and employ thyself in thinking about God alone.' 'What,' said she, 'am I not to pray for my friends and benefactors?' 'Then,' answered the Superioress, 'when thou wouldest ascend by contemplation to the higher powers of thy soul, thou must commend and entrust to God all whom thou lovest; and as though thou wert quitting this world, bidding adieu to every creature, raise up thy soul to the sight of Him whom thou lovest.' She, however, still believed not, but begged of her to pray yet more, that if these things came from God, she should receive what she desired. Still she said, 'I would not have my soul so rapt from the body and raised on high, that the remembrance of all things, and above all, of my friends, should be wiped away from my mind; I shall be satisfied to know whether these things be of God.' Now, on the day of Pentecost, when she was tossing about with anxious thoughts, the light of which we have spoken was shed upon her, so that she was wafted up into it in an unspeakable manner, and was raised on high. Then unable to bear with her weak vision that inaccessible light which was beaming upon her, she prayed that her soul should be recalled, as far as it might, to the contemplation of the passion of the Lord. Then, though she had before seen in a rapid glance that which is very being, she was suffered to descend from this lofty vision to a lower one, and was transferred in spirit to that vision of the Passion, and saw in the spirit Jesus hanging on the cross, pierced with the nails, smitten through with the lance, and

the blood flowing through the five wounds, and Him looking on herself with a most tender look. Then bursting into tears, and repenting, she begged pardon of her sisters, and declared herself unworthy of this light." There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy, and we might have learned this from him who was carried up into the third heaven, whether in the body or out of the body he knew not, and heard things which human words could no more express than the eye can hear, or the ear see.

And who were these in whom God showed forth these wonders? They were not persons sitting with their hands across all day following the fancy or the feeling of the moment; their vestments were not long and flowing, nor their veils elegantly disposed about their foreheads; their churches were not magnificent, nor did beautiful strains of devotional music float from the pealing organ through their long-drawn cloisters. They were simply little, quiet-looking nuns of St. Benedict; the wimple which enveloped their head and throat was plain and coarse, and so was their veil; and even the ample cuculla or long white mantle[1] which they wore in choir was not to sweep along the ground,[2] "for they who delight in this or in beauty of apparel without doubt are rejected of God."[3] For the winter they had a tippet of rough sheep-skin, and a cap lined with white lamb's wool, for it was very cold when they rose in the night and went into the

[1] Cuculla alba, Reg. ap. Dugdale, vii. p. lxxix. 18.

[2] Panni quibus capita earum involvuntur nigri erunt et grossi, v. Reg. p. 79, 17.

[3] Ibid.

church, when the wind blew across the fens of Lincolnshire, or the chill mist rose from the waters of the river which surrounded their little islands. Instead of being idle, during all the hours when in the Benedictine or Cistercian rule the monks were working in the fields, they were preparing the wool from their own sheep, baking[1] or washing, or cutting out the clothes of the canons for the work of the lay-sisters, or cooking for themselves and the whole community. At other times they all sat together in the cloister, some of them reading learned books in a learned language, for there were literate ladies among them ; but all, whether poring over homely English or majestic Latin, sat in perfect silence, and it was especially enjoined that there were to be no cross looks, but all were to have a cheerful and sweet countenance as became sisters. Even on the great feast-days, when ordinarily exempt from work, if the poor lay-sisters were over-burdened, the nuns were to quit their books, or even their prayers, and to help them. No music was allowed in their churches, but only grave and simple chants, like the Cistercians, except that they could not, of course, as in the Cistercian rule, forbid womanish voices ; and the chants proceeding in the stillness of the night from so many female voices must have been most sweet and beautiful. No great quantity of wax lights were allowed in the church, and altogether the same Cistercian simplicity was observed in all the details of the service. In one instance only this simplicity was relaxed to condescend

[1] Moniales de pistrino, Reg. p. lxxviii. 16.

to the lay-sisters; in a Cistercian church, instead of elaborate sculpture and canopied niches, no image was allowed but the one crucifix on the altar. But if an image of the "blessed Virgin Mary" were given to the convent, it might be given to the altar of the sisters, to remind them of her perpetual virginity, which they were to emulate. And even when the canons and the nuns made processions round the cloister, on the greatest days in the year, so little was picturesque effect aimed at, that curtains were hung round on the columns of the arches, lest the brethren and the nuns should catch glimpses of each other as the procession with cross and banner wound round the corners of the choir, or might be seen through the interstices of the windows. Meditation was the soul of the Order; the nuns rose about two o'clock in the morning, like the Cistercians, and when matins were over all who chose remained behind in the church, or glided in afterwards from the cloister; and as day dawned, the first light of morning saw them still upon their knees pouring out their hearts before God, and meditating on the adorable mysteries of the faith, or interceding for the world without, and for the friends whom they had left there. At all times, day or night, when they were not at work or in the office, they might go into the church and pray. Even those who could not read or join in the office could meditate, and though they were set to work while the others were reading, yet they were allowed to enter the church if they would.[1] If to

[1] This seems to have been the distinction between the nuns who could not read and the lay-sisters. The rule calls these nuns sanc-

all this we join the austerity of the Cistercian rule, that is, the unmitigated rule of St. Benedict, there will be but little room left for romance or sentiment. Unmurmuring obedience to superiors, whether the prioress or the canon, as spiritual director, and a perfect resignation of the will were the necessary conditions of being a nun at all.

The canons who had the spiritual care of the nuns, were very different from the old Benedictine or from the Cistercian monks; the monk was not by any means necessarily a learned man; on the contrary, his business was to labour with his own hands to get his living, so that he had much more to do with gardening and digging than with books. But the canon was necessarily a clerk and a student; Gilbert's first canons were taken from among his scholars, whom he had instructed in all the learning of Paris. Canons in the middle of the eleventh century were by no means always reputable personages: the old reform of St. Chrodegang, and the regulations of Aix-la-Chapelle had died away, and the canons were in many instances in a most corrupt state. The vehement remonstrances of St. Peter Damian had their effect, and the attention of the Supreme Pontiffs was drawn to this enormous evil, so that after the second Lateran Council, reforms were continually made in the old canons, and new congregations set up. The institution of monks instead of the canons in several of our cathedrals was a portion of this movement; and the canons of St. Victor of Paris and the Premonstrants

timoniales laicæ, while what we call lay-sisters are there called sorores in opposition to the sanctimoniales.

were all connected with it. The second Lateran Council ordered all canons to take St. Augustine's rule, and from this time they were called Augustinian. This rule consists of an adaptation of St. Augustine's 109th letter[1] to the condition of canons instead of nuns. This letter is what is meant when the rule of St. Augustine is mentioned in Gilbert's rule; it is, however, so very general in its regulations that canons were not necessarily under a discipline so severe as that of monks. The chief regulation consisted in living together and giving up property; but besides this, in particular places, a stricter discipline was in force. Thus Gilbert filled up St. Augustine's outline from other sources, but principally from the Cistercian rule. They were of the new order of monks of the twelfth century, who scandalised[2] the ancient Benedictines, Cluniacs and canons, by wearing white instead of the old sober black of the monastic orders. And in this they were followers of the Cistercians and Premonstrants; they were, like them, the growth of the age of St. Bernard, and had more subjective religion, so to speak, than appeared on the surface in the older monasteries. This, of course, is but a question of degree, for the Christian, in every case, looks beyond himself at Him who is the object of his faith; but yet it is true that the Gilbertines, like the Cistercians, preferred the "usefulness of wholesome meditation,"[3] to beautiful paintings and sculptures. In

[1] It is a question whether this letter (the 211th in the Benedictine edition) or the two sermons de moribus clericorum, is the rule pointed out in the Lateran Council. But the letter is what is probably meant by Gilbert.

[2] Vid. Oderic Vit. lib. iii. p. 711.

[3] Reg. p. 1. 15.

their habit they had more of the canon than of the monk, though indeed the white scapular for labour had something monastic in it; but the tippet of rough sheep-skin over the black tunic looks like the original aumuce of the canon, and they wore a white pallium or mantle, lined with lamb's wool, instead of the monk's cuculla. At mass and on feast days they laid aside the coarse mantle, and wore a white cope of linen, like the cuculla of the monk, except that it had no sleeves; in this cope they were buried, for it was the proper habit of canons. In the relations between the canons and the nuns, Gilbert had an eye to his old office in Alexander of Lincoln's court. As it was the theory that all the priest's power in hearing confessions emanated from the bishop, so the Prior of Sempringham, as master of the whole Order, gave license to hear confessions;[1] and as the diocese had a penitentiary, so there was a sacerdos confessionis, who confessed the nuns generally. Besides this, the intention was, that every convent of nuns should have at least seven canons attached to it, who said mass and had the ordinary spiritual direction of the nuns, under the authority of the prior.[2] The whole of these regulations were so managed that the canons and the nuns never saw each other, except when a nun was at the point of death, and the priest entered to administer extreme unction, and

[1] Priores ordinis nostri de licentia magistri generalem habent auctoritatem omnium canonicorum confessiones audiendi, Reg. p. xxxii. 5.

[2] This does not appear so much from the Gilbertine rule itself, as from the confirmation of the rule by Innocent III. Adjacimus ut unicuique domui vestri ordinis sanctimonialium canonici præponantur quibus animarum cura, pro dispositione prioris imminet.

to commend her soul into the hands of God. The nuns were unseen when they made their confessions or received the Holy Sacrament, for which purposes a grating was constructed. The time of death alone brought the canons and nuns together. There were two separate churches, and across that of the nuns was built a screen; when a choir-sister died, her body, dressed in her habit, was laid before the altar, so that the canons might come and chant the service for the dead about her.[1] The whole convent in procession accompanied any one of its members to the grave, whether canon or nun, lay brother or sister.

We have now got the whole of Gilbert's institute complete, as far as regards each individual convent, but there is another and most important portion, and that is the jurisdiction of the monasteries among themselves. In this respect, it must be confessed that the rule was defective. Gilbert was at great disadvantage; when the Cistercians refused to take the institute into their hands, he was forced to construct for himself a complicated system out of the rules of various monastic orders. The Cistercians again were said to have two houses in every one of their monasteries, one of monks, the other of lay-brethren; Gilbert had four, one of canons, another of nuns, a third of lay-brethren, and a fourth of lay-

[1] P. 91. 1.—There is some obscurity in the way in which these churches are mentioned, but the church of the nuns is distinctly named, Reg. p. 1. 17, and that of the canons, xlix. 14. It would seem that the church of Sempringham had been turned into a conventual church, while that of Tirington remained a parish church. At least the latter is not mentioned in the list of the possessions of the Order, in Innocent's confirmation.

sisters. Part of these rules he gathered from the Cistercians, and part seems to come from the Premonstrants, who had just been established in England.[1] The result of the whole is an intricate system, which leaves a feeling of indistinctness on the mind of the reader. The principal difficulty in the Order is evidently the management of the lay-brethren. In the Cistercian Order, the monks worked so much themselves, and were so numerous, that the lay-brethren had comparatively a light office. But the Gilbertine canons were few, and were students, so that the brethren had nearly the whole work to perform for all four communities. Besides which it should be remembered that the canons were an after-thought, and an unexpected addition to the labour of the brethren. In a future chapter, it will be found that this was a most serious evil; the practical working of the whole will then come before us, and the reader will be better able to judge of the defects of this portion of the institute.

[1] The Circatores of the Gilbertines seem to be derived from the Order of the Premonstrants, the provinces of which were called Circariæ.

CHAPTER VIII

GILBERT AND ST. THOMAS

WHEN in the year 1150 Gilbert founded so many houses of his Order, he might fairly have considered himself as an old soldier, who had won a title to rest. He was then between sixty and seventy years old; but he had yet many years of life to go through, and they were to be the least peaceful of all. He had hitherto remained in quiet at Sempringham, but now another hand was to bind him and lead him in his old age whether it would. From the first time that he set sail on the Channel, and touched the shores of France, he was to have trouble and vexation, and tedious journeys to and fro. He was at peace when he was the parish priest of Sempringham, with only seven holy virgins to rule, all of whom he had known from their childhood. But now the Pope had made him the head of his Order; he was now a great man, and had property under his control, houses and churches, meadows and corn-fields, islands and fisheries. He found to his cost that property involved care; he was now in danger of becoming the mere man of business. He had to be on horseback, and to ride about from convent to convent, attended by his chaplains and a lay-brother. Nay, he found what

was worse than all, that possessions involved lawsuits; he had to renew his acquaintance with the palaces of bishops, and come into the courts of chancellors and high justiciars. And when the king was in Normandy, to and fro, he had to sail across the seas, to have his cause decided. He had often to bear cold looks and sneers of contempt, nay, in defending the rights of his Church, he was ill treated by some powerful tyrant, and even beaten. He was now in a good school for humility, and he rejoiced in the humiliation which God had sent him to make him like his Lord. What these lawsuits were about, the scanty notice of his biographer does not tell us, but there was another anxiety upon him which we can easily imagine for ourselves, and that was the care of so many churches, and so many souls. What he had begun in simple faith as a part of the government of his parish, had now grown into an Order, and before he died, nine houses of nuns and canons together, and four of canons alone, had been founded, so that he had under his direction fifteen hundred nuns, and seven hundred canons. In the rule of this large body he had to preserve his soul from partiality to particular persons or places, lest it should withdraw his mind from the attention due to the whole. In order to keep his mind fixed upon God alone, he lived a life of greater austerity than seemed possible for his now aged body. He followed the usual exercises of the convent, and was therefore always in the refectory with the canons, but his meals were so slender as to be a continued mortification. By his side he ever had a platter, which he called the

Lord's dish, and into this he threw the greater part of what was set before him, that it might be given to the poor. At night, when compline was over, and the whole convent at rest, he remained in prayer, interceding for all his brethren and sisters, for prelates and kings, for the dead, and for the living. All night long he continued sitting on his bed, without laying his head on a pillow, and in this posture he slept, his head resting on his chest. God so rewarded his servant that whatever he did, his soul was ever fixed on God in prayer ; to assist himself he made a sort of rosary of his fingers, reciting some prayer on each of the joints. He loved the sweet voice of the Church in her chants, and tears ran down his cheeks when he was singing hymns and canticles in the choir.[1] But his tears were not always those of devotion and joy ; he wept with those who wept, and especially bemoaned with tears over the impenitent, who would not weep for themselves. In the direction of so many souls he met with many forms of the tempter's wiles, and many sins ; and in the difficult management of such cases, he tempered severity with kindness. "We have seen him," says his disciple, "when any one had sinned even to deserve excommunication, and then repented, at first appear hard-hearted, and almost inexorable, in order to try the contrition of the penitent ; but, when he saw that the penitence was true and sincere, he shed tears in the presence of all, and called together his friends and brethren, and made all rejoice with him over

[1] Suave sonantis vocibus ecclesiæ illectus.—Vita St. Gilb. p. 16.

the once lost sheep. Thus afflicting himself, and suffering with the afflicted, he followed Jesus with his cross."[1] For some time he would not formally enter his own Order; he probably wished to be more able to give up his charge before he died, but at last he was persuaded to do so, lest the royal authority should take occasion to appoint his successor, and make of Sempringham a sort of commendatory priory. He therefore at Bullington Priory received the habit at the hands of Roger, Prior of Malton, one of his original canons, whom he made in everything his chief adviser.

He continued in this mode of life till the year 1164, when it might seem that his life was now drawing to a close; he had outlived all the Saints of his day; St. Norbert and St. Malachi had long been at rest, and now St. Bernard was gone too, and Pope Eugenius. He had seen the last days of the Conqueror, and had lived through the days of the Red King, and of Henry, and in the troublous times of Stephen, he had dwelt at peace, and had peacefully founded his monasteries, and ruled his nuns; and now a new king was on the throne, powerful as the Conqueror, passionate as his successor, and withal wily and clever as Henry Beauclerc. Gilbert had in his youth seen St. Anselm's struggle with the secular power, and now a more deadly battle was awaiting the Church, in which he too was to take his share.[2] The battle had begun, and the Church had gained her point

[1] Ubi supra.
[2] John of Hexham, in ann. 1154.

in Stephen's time; Henry Murdach had been made Archbishop of York, in the King's teeth, and the liberty of election vindicated. Gervase, Stephen's son, had been degraded from the Abbacy of Westminster, the revenues of which he had wasted; and Theobald, after vindicating an archbishop's right to cross the Channel in obedience to the mandate of the Holy See, had returned in triumph, having laid the royal domain under an interdict; finally, in 1151, a Council, held in London, had asserted the privileges of the ecclesiastical courts against the pleas of the barons. But Henry Plantagenet was a very different man from Stephen, who was only a chivalrous assertor of a disputed crown; he was a reformer, and the ecclesiastical courts must needs square with his reforms; they must not come in the way of circuits and justices in eyre, and the King's lieges must not be excommunicated without his leave, though they have transgressed ecclesiastical law, and parish churches must be given away according to the decisions of the courts of my lord the king; and to clinch the whole, England must be separated from the head of the Church, for no appeals to Rome must interfere with the King's justice.

Henry knew not what he had done, when he called Thomas his chancellor, and said to him, "It is my will that thou be Archbishop of Canterbury." Nay, the noble-minded chancellor knew not the meaning of his own words, when he pointed to his gay dress and said with a smile, "Truly a religious man and a holy thou wouldst place in this holy seat, over so holy and famous a convent

of monks; know well, that if by God's will it should be so, thou wilt very soon turn thy soul away from me, and the goodwill which there is now between us will be turned into the most savage hatred. I know well that thou wouldst make exactions, yea, that thou dost now dare much in Church matters, which I could not bear." It was a good stroke of policy in Henry; the Pope wished it, and the bishops and the clergy wished it; it would cement so firmly the good feeling between Church and State. But Thomas knew Henry better; and he knew too what an Archbishop of Canterbury could do if he would. However, Henry had his will, and to the joy of all but himself, Thomas was consecrated archbishop. But a very few years after, the scene was much changed; the king's famous constitutions, his scheme of Church reform, had been brought forward. Thomas opposed it, for he saw through the meaning of them. He was deserted by the bishops; some could not, others would not see; they saw that Henry's eyes looked fiery, and they gave up the Church's liberty. Thomas yielded for a moment; he received the constitutions, but asked for more time to consider them before he put his seal to them. The seal was never put; the inferior ecclesiastics in general, the smaller abbeys, and sisterhoods of nuns, and the parish priests, as a body, all felt a strong and almost instinctive sympathy, all through the contest, with the archbishop, and now his momentary weakness filled the hearts of those about him with dread. As they were going home from the Council, his attendants whispered among each other sad

words about the fortunes of the Church, and one, the cross-bearer, who rode before him, murmured something about a victory won over the general, and now it was useless for others to fight. The archbishop heard his words and said, "Why sayest thou this, my son?" when the cross-bearer spoke his mind openly, then that noble heart was well-nigh broken, and he sighed deeply, for he saw his error. "No wonder," he thought; "the Church may well become a servant through my means. I came to rule her, not from the school of Christ, not from the cloister, but from the king's court, a courtier proud and vain. I, the leader of buffoons, the master of hounds, the nurturer of hawks. I, to be the shepherd of so many souls." Then tears in abundance broke forth, and he sobbed aloud. However, the battle was not yet lost, and so the king felt, as soon as it was known that the archbishop had repented. Henry's temper was none of the best, and much less would have been enough to try it. That his chancellor, the man of his creation, the warlike archdeacon, who loved the noise of battle so well that he gratuitously plunged into it, the gay courtier in the ermine cloak, the acute diplomatist learned in the law, that he should turn against him and set up for a Saint! It was too much, and he vowed vengeance. It was his own fault; he did not know what a heart beat under that ermine cloak, what a hatred of impurity and an unsullied chastity were there, even in its most worldly times. There was stuff to make a martyr of in that noble heart, now that God's grace had touched it, and Thomas listened like a little child to

his own cross-bearer, to John of Salisbury, or any friend who reproved him. But whoever was to blame it was now too late, and the archbishop must be got rid of. In 1164 articles of impeachment were framed against him, grounded on his conduct as chancellor; this was coming near the question at issue, whether an ecclesiastic was amenable to a civil tribunal. The bishops deserted him; one or two secretly assisted him, among whom, it must be said, was Henry of Winchester, who, from an instinctive liking for what was great, or because his visit to Cluny had improved him, took his part. As a body, however, the bishops left him to the tender mercies of the king.

The proceedings of the court are obscure, but it appears that on the first days of the trial heavy and ruinous fines were imposed on the archbishop; the cowardice of the bishops apparently encouraged the king, and it was intimated to Thomas, that on the last day he should have to defend himself on a criminal charge of perjury and treason. From Thomas's indignant words to the bishops it seems that he made a distinction between a civil and a criminal action, and refused to be amenable to the royal tribunal in the latter case. The former accusations respected his conduct when chancellor; this one called him in question for what he had done as archbishop. Frightful rumours were afloat that the archbishop was to be murdered in the court. At this terrible time, when all shrunk from his side, one unknown monk, the representative of many a poor brother and sister who were praying for him, bade him the next day celebrate a mass in honour

of the blessed first martyr, Stephen, and so he should escape his enemies. Thomas trembled, after having so lately lived a secular life he thought himself unfit to wear the crown of martyrdom; yet not for one moment did his heart shrink from what he had to do.[1] The next day, though it was no holyday, in full pontificals, with the mitre on his head, and the pallium round his neck, he celebrated the mass in honour of St. Stephen. Some of the king's attendants who were in the church wondered what it meant, but they wondered still more when, fresh from the sacrifice in which he had offered up himself with the immaculate Lamb, he took the cross from the hand of his attendant, and in the sacred vestments he made his way towards the king's court. All shrunk back before him. The bishops stood aghast; it was a proclamation of open war; it stripped the question of all legal form, and made it start up in all its naked awfulness; the archbishop must die, or the constitutions be accepted. By God's grace neither happened. The king and the barons did not await him; it was bringing the question to an issue a little too soon, and they retired to an inner room. It was a pale and trembling troop which they left behind, the bishops of England cowering around the majestic figure of the archbishop. Quietly he sat, with a young clerk, his attendant, at his feet; and when some of the officials from the king's chamber came down and glared fiercely on him, he only bent his head, and spoke words of comfort to the poor youth.

[1] Et adhuc conjicio ex his quæ dicitis vos non solum in civili sed in criminali causa, in foro sæculari, judicare me paratos.—Quadril. i. 29.

At length judgment was pronounced that the archbishop was a traitor and a perjured man. Then in came Robert, Earl of Leicester, with a troop of barons, and bade him come to the king, to answer the impeachment, or hear his sentence at once. "Sentence!" said the archbishop, and with the cross still in his hand, he rose up and continued, "Nay, Lord Earl, my son, hear thou first;" and he refused this impeachment before a civil tribunal, and then appealed to the Pope. His last words were, "And thus, by authority of the Church and the Apostolic See, I go hence." Then he quietly walked down the hall, and the nobles and courtiers followed him all the way with outcries and abuse, but none durst stop an archbishop so habited, and with such a weapon. The door was locked, the keys were hanging against the wall, and one of the archbishop's attendants took them down, and trying one after another, he found the right one, and the archbishop passed forth from the hall from which he never thought to have come alive.

During this contest, and indeed throughout the whole of the momentous struggle, it was evident who were on the archbishop's side, and who were against him. All in authority shrunk from him;[1] but while the bishops were afraid to support him, the clerks, who attended them, openly expressed their sympathy; thus, when Roger, Archbishop of

[1] Reliqui vero fere omnes in inferioribus gradibus constituti personam vestram sinceræ charitatis brachiis amplexantur altis sed in silentio suspiriis implorantes ut Sponsus Ecclesia ad glorium sui nominis felici vota vestra secundet eventu.—St. Thomas Ep. i. 85, ap. Lup. op. tom. x. p. 110.

York, was withdrawing from the court for fear of what was coming, he met two of his clerks and bade them follow him. But one of them, Master Robert, said: "I will not go from hence till I have seen what God's will comes of these matters; if my Lord of Canterbury fight for God and for His justice even unto blood, he cannot end his life more nobly." And, as was afterwards proved, this held good with the monastic orders; the heads of the Cistercian Order in England shrank from the storm when Henry threatened to drive every white monk out of his realm, if they continued to shelter the archbishop; but the Abbot of Circumpanum[1] was not afraid of Henry's anger, and entering into his very presence, delivered a message from the archbishop; and many a poor English monk ventured his white habit among Henry's armed retainers for the same purpose, till the barons advised the king to extirpate the Order, and Henry wrote a letter of complaint to the Abbot of Citeaux.[2] But it was not only the Cistercian authorities, but those of the Carthusians and of the Order of Grandmont, that Henry duped.[3] There was, however, an Order which steadily, and from the first, took part with the archbishop, and that was the Gilbertine. When, after the Council of Northampton, Thomas determined to fly from England, and rose at night from his bed in the church of the Cluniac convent

[1] Ep. ii. 84. There may be some mistake in the name of this Abbey, which can nowhere be found, but the fact is certain.

[2] Ep. xxxiv. b. 2; v. also Ep. i. 92.

[3] Ep. v. 12, where Mr. Froude, apparently by reading adimplerent for adimpleret, has given a turn to the sentence still more unfavourable to the monastic orders.

of St. Andrew, we find a poor brother of the Order of Sempringham at his side, to guide him through the wild swamps of the country, to the city of Lincoln. From thence, he went down the river for the space of forty miles, and the little boat threaded its way among the watery wastes and fens of Lincolnshire, till they landed on a lonely spot, surrounded on all sides by water, a hermitage belonging to the Order of Sempringham.[1] Here he remained in security for three days, for no one would have dreamed of meeting his Lordship of Canterbury in that dreary place. But he was glad of this solitary island with its little chapel in the wilderness, for he here recruited his wasted strength before he crossed the sea. He lived on the coarse food of the monks, and when the brother who was attending on him saw him sitting alone at a table, eating vegetables, he burst into tears, and left the room to hide them. His next stage was again a dependency of Sempringham called Haverolot;[2] after this he came out of the intricate wilderness of fens, the little out-of-the-way world of the Gilbertines, into the civilised path of the great world which lay beyond, and he durst not any longer travel by

[1] This is probably "pastura cum mansura, Johannis quondam heremitæ in marisco de Hoiland," mentioned in the confirmation of the possessions of the Order by Innocent III. noticed above. The place is still shown not far from Tattershall and Coningsby.

[2] A place called St. Botolph's, is mentioned on the way between the hermitage and Haverolot; it appears likely that this is the villa quæ dicitur Sanctus Botulfus, named in the confirmation; perhaps Haverolot may be the house of the Order said to be there. Camden mentions a place called Botolfstoune, near Boston, and the Order had lands at Tilney, near the same place. Haverolot was therefore probably in the neighbourhood of Boston.

day. He lay hid at Estray, a manor belonging to St. Trinity of Canterbury, till All Souls' Day, when a vessel was provided to take him over to France.

Here, in an obscure cove on the coast, was put ashore the Archbishop of Canterbury ; still he was not out of danger, for when he was chancellor he had opposed the wicked marriage of the Earl of Boulogne with an abbess, and the earl would certainly have given him up to Henry. So he put on the white habit of a Cistercian monk, and the rough monkish cloak upon his shoulders, and calling himself brother Christian, trudged on foot through the mire and the rain. He was indeed very little like himself in such a guise as this, but he could not hide himself, and two or three times he was all but discovered. Two men were seen hawking as the party passed along the road, and for a moment Thomas forgot his troubles to fix his eyes upon a beautiful hawk on the sportsman's wrist. "Ha!" said one of the men, "if I mistake not, we have here the Archbishop of Canterbury." "Fool," said his fellow, "what need has the archbishop to walk in such gear as this ?" He had not gone far before his strength failed him, and he sank down, declaring that he could go no farther, and that they must carry him or get him a horse ; so they went and bought him a horse for a few shillings, with a straw bridle into the bargain. As he rode on, equipped in this sorry way, some armed men came up and asked him if he were the Archbishop of Canterbury. "What ! is it the wont of Canterbury to ride in such trappings as these ?" was his answer, and the argument was conclusive, for they looked at the figure besmirched

with mud on the sorry steed, and thought it could not be he, who when chancellor, rode at the head of twelve hundred knights. In this guise, about evening, he came into Gravelines, and went to a poor inn to rest for the night. But mine host looked at Brother Christian and bethought himself he had seldom seen so majestic a Cistercian before, and when he looked again, he thought that that ample forehead, and long melancholy face, and those delicate hands, could only belong to the Archbishop of Canterbury; and so he told the peasant girl who waited on the guest. And the poor maiden brought him nuts, and cheese, and all she could, to do him honour; the host too threw himself at his feet, and, notwithstanding his attempts to disguise the truth, he could not but acknowledge who he was. A few days after, he was riding in a very different accoutrement from that in which he entered Gravelines; when once he got into the territories of the King of France, he was again received as became an archbishop, and rode into St. Bertin attended by a train of the gallant chivalry of France, and Louis received him with open arms.

Meanwhile, Pope Alexander and the cardinals were sadly perplexed; they had already the emperor and an antipope to deal with, and that was quite enough without quarrelling with Henry to boot. Besides which, English gold and promises had done its work even in the Sacred College; and prudent men began to think that these were not times to enforce antiquated pretensions; the archbishop was a chivalrous and high-minded man, but

chimerical schemes must not for all that trouble the peace of the kingdom. But all these, the usual excuses of cold-hearted men, disappeared when at Soissons the archbishop met the Pope, and with simple earnestness laid before him the constitutions of Clarendon. Alexander saw at once what was the question at issue, and none of the cardinals durst propose that these new royal customs should be introduced. But all became breathless with surprise when Thomas took the ring from his finger with which he had been married to his Church and put it into the hands of his Holiness. No wonder, he said, things had gone wrong with him; he had been placed on the throne of Canterbury, not by the will of God, but by the will of the king; and now the Church of Christ was suffering for his sins. He would not resign to the king, for that would have been a betrayal of the cause of the Church, but, "into thy hands, father, I resign the Archbishopric of Canterbury." At these words of a noble-minded man, daily advancing in self-knowledge and humility, many shed tears; but then in came the prudent men, and they thought the opportunity was a good one; it was the very thing which was wanted to make things smooth; it would restore the proper harmony between Church and State. But this was a doctrine too ungenerous and cowardly for the Holy See to adopt; and Alexander restored the ring to Thomas, and refused to accept his resignation. And then he said, "Up to this time thou hast abounded in the good things of this life, but now, in order that thou mayest learn how to be the comforter of the poor, thou must take religious

poverty for thy mother, and learn of her. I commend thee, therefore, to the poor ones of Christ; I mean to this man," he said, pointing to the Abbot of Pontigny, who was present. And so Thomas went to the holy Abbey of Pontigny, in the broad and rich vale through which flow the clear waters of the Serain on its way to join the Yonne; and here, with the good Cistercian monks, he remained in peace. He now, perhaps, for the first time in his life, could sit in solitude and silence and look upon himself. He would read and meditate on the mighty mysteries of theology, and study the Holy Scriptures, which he used to look upon with an awful wonder when he read them with Master Herbert of Lombardy, and used to sigh that he had no more leisure. He had leisure enough now, and in a course of long and bitter years he was training up to be a martyr.

Scarcely had Thomas reached Pontigny when a persecution commenced against his friends in England. Gilbert has his cross, too, and we will come to him in time; but who are all these that crowd around the gates of Pontigny? Cold, hunger, and nakedness are evidently playing sad havoc among them. Alas! they are the friends of Thomas, all who have lifted up a voice or a finger for him, whom now Henry in his rage has expelled from their homes and made them swear to go across the sea to Pontigny, to show the archbishop what sufferings are endured because he is obstinate. Henry sought out all the kinsfolk of Thomas, all whom he loved best, and all in any way connected with him, and bound them by this terrible

oath to present themselves at the abbey-gates. Delicate females with infants in their arms fainted by the way in Flanders, and could not come, for it was midwinter; but Thomas heard of them all from those who could reach him, and they were all names which he had known familiarly. This was the greatest cross of all; it was in its measure like the pain of our blessed Lord when He from the cross saw His mother suffering with Him. All this might be spared if Thomas would but say a little word, if he would but quit a high-souled dream, and be like other bishops. Then all these could go back to their pleasant homes, to dear England, and be happy again. But Thomas did not shrink for a moment; this would be coming down from the cross where he was hanging with his Lord, and giving up the Bride of Christ, not to the beloved disciple, but to the Roman governor. He wrote to the kings and nobles on the Continent who favoured his cause, and the poor exiles were distributed among them. But there were still troubles in England which the archbishop could not heal; and Gilbert had his full share in these. He seems to have understood the archbishop, and the interests which were at stake, better than any one of those who were not his immediate friends. Who indeed understood him thoroughly? Not certainly that bold cross-bearer who amused his indulgent master by asking him how his robe behind came to be so puffed out, and knew not that under his pontifical vestments he wore a shirt of hair; and who was disposed to smile again when he found that the cowl of the monkish habit which the Pope had sent

the archbishop was all too short. Nor did the Abbot of Pontigny understand him, when the archbishop talked of having dreamed that he should be martyred, and the good abbot, with conventual prejudice, smiled and asked, "What has a man who eats and drinks to do with martyrdom?" None of them, though they came closest to him, knew what was in him. But Gilbert understood well what he was fighting for, and showed that he was prepared to suffer for the cause. The share which Gilbert's Order had had in the escape of the archbishop out of the kingdom, exposed its head to suspicion. At this time the king was in great dread of the sentence of an interdict proceeding from the archbishop upon the whole kingdom, and the most savage orders had been issued against any clerk or other person who should bring the sentence into the kingdom. Loss of eyes and burning were a portion of the provisions of this sanguinary enactment. This might be a specimen for Gilbert of what the king was capable of in his wrath. When, therefore, with all the priors of his Order, he was summoned to Westminster to clear himself of this suspicion, he knew not what might happen to him. When he arrived in London, he found that he was accused of having sent supplies of money to the archbishop. This was high treason; but the judges (it was most probably in the court of the Earl of Leicester, high justiciar of England) were disposed to be lenient, and to respect his grey hairs and his character for sanctity. They only required of him to take an oath that he had not sent supplies to the archbishop. This seemed a very simple mode of terminating the

affair; but Gilbert bethought himself that though it was quite true that he had not sent any money, all the world would suppose, if he took the oath, that he thought it wrong to assist the noble exile in his struggle for the rights of the Church. He therefore quietly refused to take the oath. The judges threatened exile; his priors thought it chimerical to refuse the safety which was offered to him by Providence; they thought it wrong, and a violation of their vow, to expose themselves to be forced away from their cloisters for a doubtful point of honour. But Gilbert had made up his mind; he knew how much was at stake, and he thought it worth the risk; he rejoiced and thanked God that in his old age, after a life of peace, God should now give him grace to bear the reproach of Christ, and to be a confessor for His Church. It is a temptation peculiar to monks, to convert their cloister too much into a home, and to set their hearts upon it; and so it was with the Gilbertine priors, and with other monastic authorities in those days too; they had given up one home for Christ's sake, and never expected to have to give up another, with which all their religious associations were connected. The great world beyond their cloister was nothing to them, and why should they give up the scene of their duties, to which they were bound by a solemn vow, for any of its turmoils? And it might have been thought that Gilbert's many years of cloistral life would have made him identify Sempringham with the Church; but he was now ready to risk the breaking up of his Order, and to join the archbishop in his exile. The judges were sorely puzzled;

they knew not what was to be done with a man who would not take the mercy which they offered him. They were, however, unwilling to condemn him, so they sent over to Normandy, to know what was the king's pleasure, for Henry was then on the Continent.[1] Meanwhile Gilbert and his priors were detained in London, to the sore annoyance of the latter; they might any day be sent at once into exile, as had happened to so many, in a state of destitution into a foreign land. Gilbert had enough to do to keep them in order; many of them were ready at once to take the oath, and to go back to their convents. He took care to keep up the services just as if they were at Sempringham, and their sweet chants were heard by the populace outside: it was a novel thing to hear in London the voices of a set of canons fresh from the fens of Lincolnshire. While all about him were in trembling expectation of the king's sentence, he was unusually gay. It was the instinctive joy of a heart feeling sure that God was for it, because the world was against it. In the very court of Westminster, while all his canons were sitting with long faces about him, he bought some trinkets of a boy who was hawking them about, simply to try to amuse his downcast companions. At length, when all were expecting the very worst, when Gilbert himself had made up his mind to die in France, far away from Sempringham, an order came from Henry, reserving the cause for his special judgment, and ordering the Gilbertines meanwhile to be dis-

[1] This makes it probable that these events happened in 1164, when Henry was in Normandy.

missed. Whether Henry thought that there would be something absurd in this in the eyes of all England, banishing a few religious who lived in a swamp, as disaffected and dangerous persons; or whether, to give him his due, he really admired the unbending character of Gilbert, whom it is expressly said that he revered; or whether both together be true; at all events so it was, the Prior of Sempringham beat King Henry and his justiciars to boot. Then, and not till then, he, without any oath, simply informed the judges that he had not sent any supplies to the archbishop. This was not an official act at all, and therefore was quite different from what had been required of him, and he went back to Sempringham, thanking God that he had escaped the snares which had been prepared for him.

CHAPTER IX

THE REBELLION

GILBERT'S trials are not over yet; one still awaits him, and that perhaps the worst of all. Some men die young, and do a great work before they die; others die in middle age, when their powers are first brought into play, and their work beginning to thrive; others again are spared to become old men, and find their bitterest cross at the last. And so it was with Gilbert; he had all his life long enjoyed the love and esteem of all about him, and the greatest Saints of the age had been his friends; but now he had to endure the suspicions and the coldness of the good, the shame of evil report, and the ingratitude of those whom he had nurtured. It has been said before that the most imperfect part of the Order was the management of the lay-brethren; and at this time, two instances of most flagrant disorders occurred among them. One of them is an isolated fact, which would be inexplicable if it were not connected with the licentious spirit which appeared about this time among this portion of the Order. It does not appear certain whether Gilbert ever knew it at all, for it only occurs in a letter of St. Aelred to one of his private friends; and from the desperate and wicked efforts

made to hush it up, and from the fact that the prior applied to St. Aelred, and not to him, it seems probable that it never reached his ears. Its sickening details might therefore, perhaps, have been spared the reader, and yet they are instructive from the deep feeling of humiliation which they leave, or ought to leave, upon the mind. A monastery had been founded, as has been said before, in Yorkshire, in a place so dreary and lonely, and so surrounded with water, that it was called Watton, or the Wet-town. To this house a little girl of four years old had been sent by Henry, Archbishop of York, to be brought up by the nuns. The poor child had always been unruly, and the nuns had never been able to do anything with her; and when she grew up, though she wore the veil, she never had the heart of a nun.[1] One day the lay-brethren[2] came into the monastery to do some work; the unhappy maiden lingered near, and watched them intently; at length her eyes met those of one of them. It is useless to go through the steps which led her to crime; suffice it that she fell. By-and-by her shame could no

[1] The expression is "suscipitur nutrienda." It does not appear from St. Aelred's narrative that she was offered by the archbishop as a nun, and thus, according to St. Benedict's rule, obliged irrevocably to take the veil. Her wearing the habit does not prove it. Not long before this time, Matilda, who had lived from her infancy in the Monastery of Wilton, and had been obliged by her aunt to wear the black veil and habit, had been allowed by St. Anselm to marry Henry I. Nor again can it be made out from St. Aelred's expressions that she had made her profession at all. He certainly does not say that she had.

[2] Frater in the Gilbertine rule always means *lay-brother*, and not *monk*.

longer be concealed, and her partner in wickedness fled away. The nuns perceived what had taken place, and now comes the most miserable part of a miserable tale. Instead of taking the fall of one of the inmates of the house as matter of humiliation, some of the nuns grew frantic with rage. They had been proud of their chastity, as giving them honour in the sight of men, and now they began to imagine that the finger of scorn would be pointed at them. Instead of rejoicing that by the dispensation of God without their fault, they were despised by men as sinners, as had happened to our blessed Lord, they murmured against God. A party of them cruelly beat and loaded with chains the wretched girl. Their rule obliged them to confine her, but they might have comforted her in her prison, and tried to win her back to Christ. Their next act was to get, by stratagem, the partner of her guilt into their power, and to execute upon him a sanguinary and horrible vengeance. Instead of trusting that their own purity would be asserted by him who saved St. Agnes from the place of shame, they devised a scheme of fraud in order to conceal the event altogether. It is needless to go into the details of their wickedness ; it is enough that they imposed on St. Aelred, and persuaded him that the girl had repented, and had been miraculously delivered, and that the chains had dropped from her hands. It is remarkable that they did not send for Gilbert to be witness to the miracle, instead of St. Aelred ; they probably thought that they could not impose upon him. But however this be, so runs the tale, and

a miserable tale it is, which may make any one tremble who is disposed to pride himself upon his austerities or his purity, forgetting that without charity they are nothing worth. These nuns of Watton were firm and zealous rather for their own honour than for the Lord, and were betrayed into a terrible system of deceit, which now rises up in judgment against them with posterity.

As far as the history of the Order is concerned, this falls in with the account given of the rebellion of the lay-brethren in Gilbert's old age. It was a hard matter to keep in order so many strong and hardy peasants. It required the entire Cistercian system to do so, where every monk was in his way a farmer, and it could not be effected by a few canons, who were literary men. Accordingly, it was found that Hodge, the smith, and Gerard, the weaver, had organised a conspiracy among the lay-brethren, to procure a mitigation of the rule. They began to think that, after all, a little more eating and drinking, and a little less austerity and psalm-singing, would make life more easy and pleasant. It was soon discovered that they were not the chief promoters of the disobedience of the brethren. Hodge and Gerard were among the lowest of the number ; the former had been taken from the road-side, by Gilbert, when a beggar boy, with his father and brothers, and had been taught the trade of a smith. Their defection would therefore not have been dangerous, but mention is made of two others, to whom Gilbert had entrusted the chief care of the lay-brethren, and these appear to have secretly taken advantage of the vagabond propensities of the

smith and the weaver to obtain a mitigation of the rule. Several of the brethren, headed by these two worthies, the weaver and the smith, refused to work, and went about spreading calumnies against the canons of the Order. Gilbert, in order to stop the growing disaffection, excommunicated the chief offenders, and required of the rest an oath that they should in future keep to what they had vowed in their profession.[1] There must have been some clever men among these lay-brethren; it was an unusual thing to make the profession over again, unless there was reason to suppose that the first profession was invalid. An abbot could not exact it, and Gilbert seems to have overstept his powers[2] in requiring what was equivalent to a second profession. The lay-brethren knew this, and while some of them left the monastery and went all over England maligning the canons, these two, Hodge and Gerard, were sent to Rome to demand justice in the name of the rest. Strange that two runaway brethren, a smith and a weaver, should have the power of obtaining an audience from the supreme pontiff! but it suits well the Head of the Church to hear the complaint of the poor as well as the great. Not only did they apply for redress, but they obtained an order in their favour, and returned in triumph to Sempringham.

[1] This is gathered from St. Thomas of Canterbury's letter, Ep. ii. 69, and also from the letter of the Bishop of Norwich, quoted in Dugdale, after the Gilbertine rule. The whole account is very confused, and all that can be done is to put it together in the best way of which it is capable.

[2] Quod nulla, sicut audivimus, religionis institutio exigere consuevit. —St. Thomas, ubi sup.

Technically they may have been right, but Gilbert, in a few words, quoted from him by his biographer, calls it "a cruel mandate," and so it was; all authority was of course at once broken up in the Order, and now the lay-brethren were prepared to go all lengths in their attempts to obtain their demands. Gilbert, distressed as he was at the verdict given by his Holiness, obeyed it in every point. It was a trying time; mortified pride, a just indignation at ingratitude, his sense of what was best for the Order, which he had raised, and all that complicated feeling, so well expressed by "being hurt," would have prompted him to treat the offenders harshly. But he obeyed the Pope, and took them back into the Order.

The brethren now in a body demanded a mitigation of the rule; but here they found him inflexible. He did not consider whether the rule was too strict or not; it appears afterwards that he did think it too severe; but that was not the question then, the brethren asked for it in a wrong way, and they must submit before anything could be done. His old enemies, Hodge and Gerard, elated by their victory at Rome, now broke all bounds; they pilfered the community, and with the spoils bought two fine horses, on which they rode about the country, going where they would, and publishing everywhere the most atrocious falsehoods against the canons. At the same time the rest of the lay-brethren prosecuted their cause with vigour; Gilbert, in his old age, had to drag his worn-out body from tribunal to tribunal to hear the cause judged. Here he had the right side of the ques-

tion ; he was their prior, and he alone could release them from the professions which they had made to him ; the Pope indeed who had confirmed the Order, might revoke his confirmation, but, till then, no bishop could make him alter the rule ; he could only make him observe it. Many bishops tried to persuade him to mitigate the rule, but he was inflexible ; they must first submit to him. But it was a dreadful trial for Gilbert to have the consciousness that vague reports were afloat in the world against the reputation of his canons. The Order was of such a nature that the world was sure to receive with willing ears whatever was said against it. The bitterest cross, however, to Gilbert must have been the displeasure of the exiled Archbishop of Canterbury, of him whom he so loved, for whom he had risked so much. St. Thomas could only hear vague reports across the sea ; again the former verdict obtained at Rome, was a fact against the prior, and the subsequent conduct of the lay-brethren looked as if they had never been received back at all into the community, since the Pope's mandate. He, therefore, wrote to Gilbert a letter of grave rebuke. His affection for him is evident throughout ; "God knoweth," he says, "that we love thee with sincere charity in Christ ;" and he calls the Order "the fruits of our labour," as though he identified himself with Gilbert. But he commands him strictly to do his best to call back the brethren who are scattered abroad, and accuses him of disobeying the Apostolic See ; and he advises him to mitigate the rule, lest after his days his work should perish.

Poor Gilbert! good and bad were against him. He could not ride abroad without feeling that the finger of scorn might be pointed at him and his train, in consequence of the calumnies of the false brethren. But, unlike the nuns of Watton, he took it all patiently, because it had come upon him in the way of God's providence. He humbled himself and acknowledged that he deserved it all, and thanked God for the affliction, for it taught him to love none on earth too well. He was now on the verge of the grave; all his life long he had been honoured, and it would now do him good to be despised. At the same time he felt sure that God would clear up the innocence of his canons; and so it was; Hodge and Gerard, in the course of their wanderings on the backs of their high-mettled palfreys, fell into grievous immoralities, and their flagrant licentiousness turned all men against them. There was immediately a reaction in favour of the canons, as there always is sooner or later in favour of those who have been unjustly treated. There is a retributive justice in public opinion, which, in the long run, rights itself, and repairs its own mischief. Men opened their eyes to the holiness of the Order, and soon after, Gilbert had the satisfaction of seeing the unruly brethren submit themselves unconditionally, all except friend Hodge, who persisted in his vices to the end. The brethren only humbly begged of Gilbert to mitigate the rule as he thought fit. Then, and not till then, after he had given the kiss of peace to the penitent, he promised that "in tempering whatever was too rigorous, and in correcting the statutes, he should

in all things be guided by the authority of his Lordship the Pope, and the counsel of religious men." Gilbert was now rewarded for his patience; it often happens that men step forward at the end of a contest, who, if they had only shown themselves at the beginning, might have saved a great deal of trouble, and it may be, that God so wills it for the perfecting of His Saints. So it happened in this case; many of the English bishops, especially those who lived near the seats of the Order, now wrote to the Pope in favour of Gilbert. One of these letters, that of the Bishop of Norwich, has been preserved, and is so striking a testimony in favour of the Order, that it will be well to quote it at length.

"To the most holy father and sovereign pontiff Alexander, William, Bishop of Norwich, the servant of his Holiness, sendeth greeting, and obedience . . . Gilbert, of Sempringham, both from his near neighbourhood to me, as well as from the renown of his sanctity, for which he is so eminent, cannot be unknown to me. His soul is the dwelling of wisdom, and he draws from the fountains of the Holy Spirit those waters which he knows so well how to pour into the ears of others. In winning and retaining souls for God, he is so zealous and successful, that when I compare myself with him, I am ashamed of my own slothfulness, and it seems as if the prophet Esaias were chiding such as I am, when he says, 'Be ashamed, O Sidon, saith the sea.' Among his nuns, of whom he hath gathered for God a multitude greater than I can number, there burn such a fervid zeal for religion, and careful love of chastity, and so faithfully do

they keep apart from seeing or conversing with men, that they realise that Scripture which saith, 'My beloved is for me, and I for him, who feedeth among the lilies.' Of his canons, whose innocence I hear has been calumniated to your clemency, I call God and mine own soul to witness, I never remember to have heard a single word of ill fame, and I could not but have heard it from their near neighbourhood to me, and from the multitude of persons who come to me on business. All access to the nuns is so entirely forbidden, that not even the prior has general license to see or speak to any of them, and in the reception of the Holy Eucharist, neither priest nor recipient know one another. Each portion of the community has its own house, its own cloister and church, its own houses for sleeping, meditation and prayer. From his lay-brethren he only requires that they keep inviolate that mode of life, which they have professed, and this in my presence they have promised with much devotion to do. He does not presume to change what has been confirmed by your authority and that of my predecessors, and what they, after long trial, have promised and vowed to observe; lest if he changed it, he might be open to the charge of laxity and presumption. All I wish is, that this lawsuit, which certain lukewarm men of cold charity have entered against him, should be referred to the judgment and witness of men who have a zeal for God according to knowledge, that they may discover the truth by inspecting the privileges granted by the Apostolic See, and by the clear examination of facts, men who have known and

experienced what it is to observe a rule without tiring of the religious life, or looking back after putting their hands to the plough. A man worn out by age and more full of virtues than of days, ought not to be treated so, that through discouragement he should swerve from his purpose to the detriment of many souls, but be rather encouraged and treated with gentleness, that he may persevere to keep alive the salvation which God has worked by him in our land. Daily does the wheat grow thin in the garner of the Lord, and the chaff is multiplied. May God preserve your Holiness in safety for His Church. Farewell."

Besides these bishops Gilbert found a more extraordinary advocate, and that was Henry II. At one period of the contest with the archbishop, it was his policy to conciliate the monastic orders; their names were useful to him in his desperate struggle.[1] Another reason why he liked the Gilbertine Order was, that it was purely English. Henry, like all our kings, loved not the spiritual jurisdiction of any foreign prelate, abbot or potentate. For this reason he disliked the Cistercians; in the latter part of this contest, it suited his purpose to cajole them, but when the archbishop was sheltered at Pontigny, he wrote to authorities abroad and threatened to turn every Cistercian out of England. The Gilbertines, therefore, were an Order that did not interfere with his purposes. Besides this, however, it appears that he had a real reverence and regard for Gilbert. Henry Plantagenet had his good

[1] Ep. iii. 29; iv. 38.

moments, and under good guidance he might have been other than he was. He at one time patronised the Carthusians, and procured the appointment of St. Hugh to the diocese of Lincoln. In the same way he could not help admiring the unworldliness of Gilbert. He therefore wrote to the Pope and threatened to resume whatever he himself or his nobles had given to the Order, if the institute was changed by the machinations of the rustics, as he called them, who were the bondmen of the soil. Henry was imperious even when he did good; however, Alexander could not resist so many testimonies in favour of the Gilbertines, and sent a mandate to Gilbert forbidding any one to attempt to alter the institute without his consent, and empowering him and his successors, the priors of Sempringham, to correct and amend the statutes with the help of the other priors of the order. Alexander added also various privileges to the Order, and confirmed all that his predecessors had granted.

CHAPTER X

THE DEATH OF GILBERT

THE gaps left in his narrative by Gilbert's biographer have made the various chapters of his life more like detached scenes than a continuous history; or rather it would be more true to say, that his life was ordinarily one of peace and harmony, passed in the calmness of the convent, so that for many years he was hidden with God, and history has nothing to do with him. Sometimes he is called forth for some special purpose and he plays his part before the world and all men gaze upon him, and then he goes back to his cloister and is no longer heard of. It is all like a sweet and low chant which cannot be heard outside the walls of the church, except when sometimes it swells into bolder and more majestic music. We are now, however, come to the last scene of all. Gilbert, as we have seen, outlived one generation of saints; but before he died, another with whom he had been connected had now passed away. St. Thomas of Canterbury had won his crown nineteen years before Gilbert's death; and he was at least eighty years old when the Saint was martyred. After all his troubles he spent these last days in peace; when the ear heard him, then it blessed

him; when the eye saw him, it gave witness to him. He was revered all over England; and we have seen, says his biographer, bishops on their knees begging for his blessing, yea, and bishops from foreign lands, which the echoes of his fame had reached, coming to beg for a portion of his garments to carry back with them to their own lands as relics. But the strangest homage which he received was, when King Henry would not allow him to come to his court on the business of the Order, but went himself to his lodgings with his peers, and humbly begged for his benediction. The scourge of the monks of Canterbury must have done its work when Henry bowed so low. Eleanor too, his unhappy queen, loved to bring to him her princely boys, that they might kneel down and be blessed by him. Henry seems to have had an almost superstitious reverence for him; when his sons revolted against him, and his queen was imprisoned by him for her crimes, when poor Henry's heart was broken, and the sins of his life all came upon him, then a messenger came to tell him that Gilbert was dead. The king groaned deeply, and said, "Well do I know that he has passed away from the earth, for that is the reason that all these misfortunes have found me out." A man who had lived through the whole of the twelfth century from its very beginning, could not but be an object of reverence. It was a wonderful sight to see this old man with his body bent with age, his bones scarce cleaving to his flesh, and his whole frame pallid and wasted, yet still capable of managing the affairs of his Order,

and going about with his eye undimmed, and his mind as vigorous as ever. At length, however, his sight failed him and he became quite blind before he died. Then he sent for Roger, Prior of Malton, and put the whole management of the Order into his hands. Still, however, the spirit rose above the body; he could not ride, but he was borne in a litter from place to place. His brethren were very anxious that he should take his meals in his bedroom, for the refectory was a long way off, and there were some steps to be mounted at the entrance. He, however, never would consent to this arrangement, and said: "Gilbert will never set an example to his successors of eating good things in his room." So every day he was carried by some of the brethren into the refectory. Even in this extreme old age, when his limbs hardly held together, he kept his old practice of watching at night, and would rise when all were asleep and kneel by the side of his bed; and when once he was discovered in this posture by his brethren, he half chid them, as though they had not made his bed comfortably the evening before, to account for his being found in this strange posture. When his external sense had failed him, the eye of his soul was the more fixed upon God, and tears often ran down his cheeks as he thought upon his Saviour and His infinite mercies. He would often speak on spiritual things with the brethren, but his words were few and short, and he soon relapsed into silence, which was often broken by strong prayers and ejaculations which burst from him, "How long, Lord, wilt Thou forget me for ever?" "Woe is

me, for the time of my sojourning is prolonged!" And if he ever thought that he had spoken more than he ought, he would at once kneel down and repeat the confession of the Church, humbly begging to be absolved. In this way he lived on, hardly holding to earth either by body or soul, till he was more than a hundred years old; at length, early in the year 1189, he felt his end to be approaching, and he sent letters to all his priories to beg that prayers should be offered for him, leaving his blessing behind him, and absolving all from their sins against the rule, at the same time solemnly warning all those who should quarrel with their brethren and break the peace of the Order, that this absolution would profit them nothing. He was then at Cadney, one of the lonely island monasteries of the Order, and so near his end was he thought to be, that he received extreme unction, and the last rites of the Church. But he rallied, and the dying Saint still crossed the waters which surrounded the island, and his chaplains bore their precious burden to Sempringham, through lonely places, lest they should be forcibly detained by any one who might wish Gilbert's bones to lie in his church. All the priors of the Order had time to assemble and come to him. Here he was lying, as was thought, in a sort of stupor on his bed, and no one was with him but the canon who eventually succeeded him as prior. He was conscious of no one's presence, when he was heard murmuring low to himself the Antiphone in the service for a confessor, "He hath dispersed abroad, and given to the poor." Then, he continued in the same low tone, as though he

were expounding it in the church, "Yes, he hath dispersed to many persons; he gave, he did not sell; it was to the poor, too, not to the rich." And then he subjoined as if to the canon who was with him, "It is thy place to do so now." He continued in this half-unconscious state through the night, till, as the morning dawned, and the convent was singing the lauds for Saturday, and the reader's voice repeated, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand," the eternal morning dawned on the blessed Saint, and his soul passed into the hands of its Creator.

This was on Saturday, the 4th of February 1189. Twelve years after, on the Eve of Holy Cross Day, 1202, a vast concourse assembled at Sempringham to witness the translation of his relics to a more honourable place in the church of the Priory. He had wrought no miracles in his lifetime, but when he was dead God was pleased, through his intercession, to heal many who came to kneel at his tomb. In the beginning of the year, Innocent III. had canonised him, after a judicial inquiry into his merits and the miracles wrought by his body; and now the Archbishop of Canterbury, with other bishops, and many an abbot, came to translate his relics. Then the body of St. Gilbert was raised on the shoulders of England's chief nobles, and in solemn procession was borne to the place which it was to occupy. Truly, God doth bring down the mighty from their seat, and exalt the humble and meek.

Now that we have gone through St. Gilbert's life, for so we may now call him, it seems hard to

us to realise that such a person ever existed. We who live in the world, whose eye glances from one object of affection to another, and is taken by all, whose ears are tickled with praise and pained by blame, who set up for intellect and talent, if we have it, and fancy that we have it, if we have it not, whose highest austerity consists in temperance, and highest charity in good-humour, we can hardly do more than gaze on a character like Gilbert's, and wonder if after all it be true. Those of us who rise above this standard, in so far as they rise above it, may enter into the notion of a saint. But to us, commonplace Christians, it is only a beautiful dream of something which is past long ago, and which is nothing to us. And this sort of feeling is a dangerous one and likely to increase, when lives of saints take the place of romances and fairy tales. To deny or not to realise the existence of Christian Saints, is apt to make a wide gap in Christian faith. They who consider the Saints in a dreamy way, will hardly be able to do more than dream that there has been upon earth one, who was and is Man-God, for the lives of saints are shadows of His, and help to interpret His actions who is incomprehensible. They who look upon the saints as mere personages in religious romance, will be apt to look on Christianity as a beautiful philosophy. St. Gilbert was a real being of flesh and blood, the parish priest of Sempringham; his institute is a fact in the history of the English Church; it was raised up by God as an opponent of the lust which was the especial wickedness of the day. It saved a great many souls which might otherwise

have perished; it raised many others to an extraordinary degree of sanctity. It is, therefore, a fact which stares us in the face and of which we must make the best we can; a vast number of persons, amounting to fifteen hundred, did give up all the joys of home, and refuse to give place in their hearts to the strong affections which entwine round the hearts of those who are married, in order to live in poverty a hard and austere life. In this case, too, all allowances are made; the defects of the Order are exposed; the temptations peculiar to monastic life are seen clearly; the nuns of Watton, it is true, did become savage old maids instead of virgins of Christ; the Order did not spread much after the death of the founder, and, unlike the great monastic institutions of the Continent, never out of the country which gave it birth; finally, it appears in after times to have degenerated. Yet, with all these drawbacks, it is true that St. Gilbert did a great work, and one at which kings and queens stopped to look, for it forced itself upon their notice. Even the impure Eleanor loved to think of the institute of holy virgins, and the tyrant Henry bowed before its founder. And all this was effected by a man not so unlike externally to one of ourselves. He went to Paris as we might go to Oxford or Cambridge, and he came back and took a family living and was ordained upon it. His character, too, as we have said before, was not one of what is called romance. He was distinguished by a quiet waiting upon the will of God, and a most energetic and unbending execution of it, when he had once ascertained it. He remained in the

Bishop of Lincoln's palace much longer than he wished, because though utterly uncongenial to his tastes and habits, he would not break away from where God had placed him. At length the archdeaconry was offered him; this was too much and he went away. All the vast good which he effected, was the result of natural circumstances. The institution of his Order was for the sake of seven maidens, whom Providence put into his way, and to whom God gave grace to desire perfection under his guidance, in his parish. His application to St. Bernard, and the appointment of canons, arose naturally out of the increase of the monasteries. Enthusiasm such as his is seldom found connected with such quiet waiting upon God. And this part of his character all may imitate. Not every man is called upon to found a monastic order and govern it; nor to take the part of a holy archbishop, like St. Thomas, under peril of a king's anger; but all must quietly wait upon God in times of darkness, and keep their souls free from inordinate affection, and be ready to follow the gentle leading of God's will wherever it may lead them, even to the most painful sacrifice. Very few of us can be monks and nuns; but all are called upon to live above the world, and by daily self-sacrifice to train themselves to give up at a moment's notice whatever is most dear. And they especially who have apparently least duties, unmarried persons, should wait calmly on the Providence of God, ready to accept whatever lot in life He may prepare for them, wishing for nothing, and hoping for nothing but what He wills. Meanwhile, they have more time than others for

frequent prayer and for long and steady contemplation of our blessed Lord, in the great mysteries of the faith. Then, as the wonders of heaven, by God's grace, grow upon them, they will see the excellence of the good part of Mary, to sit at the Lord's feet and to hear the words which He speaks to the soul. And in proportion as they realise the Incarnation of the Lord, they will love more and more to contemplate the saints, and especially St. Mary, for a reverence for her is inseparable from that right faith in the Humanity of the Son of God, which we must all believe and confess. They will learn that the high honour in which the Church has ever held holy virginity, is a necessary portion of Christian doctrine, and not a rhapsody peculiar to any age. It is a feeling which has seized on minds of every stamp from the most matter-of-fact to the most imaginative, if only illuminated by God's grace. St. Gilbert's character could not come under either of these classes ; besides the all-enduring energy of the homely Saxon, he had a dash of the adventurous Norman ; and the Holy Spirit had blended both these discordant elements into one, as He would in His mercy again blend the spiritual character of the English nation, if it were not a stiff-necked people.

NORTHUMBRIAN SAINTS

St. PAULINUS
St. EDWIN
St. ETHELBURGA
St. OSWALD
St. OSWIN
St. EBBA
St. ADAMNAN
St. BEGA

THE LIFE OF

ST. PAULINUS

ARCHBISHOP OF YORK, A.D. 644

To the ecclesiastical scholar there is something mournfully striking in the sight of a modern map of his native country. Travelling northward from the metropolis, on the western side of the island, his eye runs through an almost continuous chain of manufacturing towns, the spiritual destitution of whose dense population presents problems, both of a political and ecclesiastical kind, as difficult as they are distressing, and which seems to stand out the more distinctly from the background of wealth, luxury, and refinement created by these very multitudes. On this side there is little to remind us of the labours of St. Chad or St. Wilfrid. Whereas, if we look down the eastern shore of England, the eye is still conducted pleasantly from one holy home to another, always finding nigh at hand some monument of old munificence, some beautiful relic of Catholic ages. Cambridge and Ely, Peterborough and Lincoln, seem to afford resting-points to the eye between London and York; and the view of that wonderful minster rising far off above the

woody level is most grateful after the unsightly disorder of those huge towns, which only seems to typify the moral disorder, the civil discontent and religious discord of the people within. But we should be uncarnest men indeed if the feelings excited by such prospects rested in mere antiquarian regrets, or were the parents of no worthier offspring than a few architectural societies, through whose well-meant labours Catholic ceremonial might shoot far ahead of Catholic austerity, and so afford Satan a convenient hold to frustrate the revival of Catholic truth amongst us. Rather we would hope by setting forth the deeds of the old missionary monks and holy founders of these glorious abbeys to provoke our own generation to a godly jealousy, and to plead the cause of our manufacturing districts most effectually by adorning the memory of those whose peaceful and conventual cities are after all but so many witnesses of what the old Saints did against difficulties hardly less than ours. And especially the monastic character of the early Saxon Church, by which the England of ancient times was subdued to the Cross, may intimate to us that, however lawful it may be in itself, and, if so be, of primitive warrant, yet a sturdier weapon than a married clergy can alone hope to convert (for we may not use a milder word) the crowded multitudes of modern England.

Such thoughts naturally come to mind when we prepare to relate the acts of St. Paulinus of York. From the persecution of Diocletian, during which the father of Constantine died at York, we pass over the fortunes of that famous city, till the Easter

Sunday of 627, when Paulinus baptised St. Edwin in his rude cathedral of wood, which through the grateful care of that monarch and the diligence of St. Oswald grew from its humble beginnings, and after multiplied changes, additions, and restorations, remains amongst us at this day, acknowledged as one of the most exquisite ecclesiastical buildings of Christendom.

The early history of St. Paulinus, before he was connected with England, is told in few words. He was in all probability a monk,[1] and apparently of the same house with St. Augustine of Canterbury. It was in the first year of the seventh century that the English archbishop sent his two ambassadors, Lawrence and Peter, to plead with the holy father, St. Gregory, for fresh labourers in the vineyard; and, after a year's delay at Rome, the Pope sent back the messengers accompanied by twelve new apostles, many of whom were ordained to shine as lights in the Saxon Church; and by holy living and holy suffering to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things. For among the twelve were Mellitus, Justus, and Paulinus.

Their journey, if we may judge by the Pope's commendatory letters, partook of that irregularity which characterised all travelling in religious ages, when various shrines and places gifted with miracle attracted the pilgrim to the right or left, especially when bound on a difficult and perilous enterprise to extend the Church of Christ. It would seem that these holy monks (as we have ventured to

[1] Eum fuisse monachum probabile, at exploratum non est.—Mabill. Index SS. prætermiss. in sæc. Ben. ii.

assume that they were) passed by Marseilles, through a portion of the diocese of Toulouse, afterwards the scene of the great St. Dominic's labours among the heretic Albigenses, up the Saone, northward as far as Metz, and thence to Paris, where they were commended to the pious hospitality of King Clothaire, and Brunichildis, who had been formerly the queenly hostess of Augustine. They arrived in Kent in 601, and appear to have been honourably received by the good King Ethelbert, and his consort Adilberga, to both of whom the Pope had written, comparing them respectively to Constantine and Helena; though the personal character of the Saxon king seems to have had more of earnestness and sterling worth about it than that of the great emperor. The comparison, perhaps, was meant for the public rather than the private character of the king.

Truly the Church of Christ has antiquities of a more touching sort than those which the regal succession of any nation has to boast, even as her spiritual descent is more unbroken. The very monastic house, from which St. Gregory sent forth Augustine, and afterwards these new fellow-labourers, still remains set apart for sacred uses. With the Coliseum on its right and the gardens of the Cæsars on its left, and almost in view of the old Church of St. Clement where the Pelagian heresy, the offspring of a British monk, was formally condemned, the same site is at this day occupied by the white-robed Camaldolese. There at this day the simple-mannered and kind-hearted children of St. Romuald contemplate in silent austerity the

mysteries of the Catholic faith, while the solitary palm-tree on the hill close by stands like a beacon in the garden of the Passionists, who pray specially for England. From that same house of St. Gregory, where his altar and his rude dormitory still exist, the sixteenth Gregory has been raised to fill the chair of St. Peter; yet when he dwells in the lordly Vatican, it is within the Saxon suburb of Rome, the Borgo (Burgh) where the English pilgrims once resided, and within which St. Peter's is included. Surely one may dwell innocently on these little things, when our isolation presses heavily upon us; it is a relief even for the imagination to play with names and places which testify conjointly of England and of Catholic unity. And we too are, in one sense, the children of that house, for we are living on the labours of the monks who came therefrom. Though fearful storms have swept by, and the sacrilege of schism is in our ears and before our eyes, we are struggling to maintain ourselves under the shadow of the tree which they planted. Woe unto us if we be not "watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die," lest peradventure our works be not "found perfect before God."

The next twenty-four years of Paulinus's life are involved in obscurity. He disappears entirely from our view, or, to speak more wisely, is hidden with God, till 625. Yet it is not difficult to conjecture that his days were spent in active toil for the Church, for he lived among great deeds, and was an eye-witness of many things which gave consistency and character to the Saxon Church. The

death of the great St. Gregory would hardly be unfelt by the Kentish labourers. The Synod of Augustine's Oak drew a formal line between the British and the Saxon Christians. The conversion of King Sebert, the building of Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's, and the founding of Ely, the erection of the see of Rochester, and the death of St. Augustine, were all notable events which mark those four-and-twenty years in the history of our Church. But, if it was allowed to St. Paulinus to behold the Church thus taking shape and gathering strength, and doubtless himself to aid in the labour, there were darker scenes of which he was also a witness. Whether during that unhappy year after the apostacy of the kings Paulinus retired with Justus and Mellitus, an action which we do not know enough of to condemn (for those we should sit in judgment on were saints), or whether he remained with St. Lawrence, we are not told: but, at all events, on Eadbald's repentance he would without question be found in Kent, and during the five years which succeeded he probably laboured for St. Lawrence.

There are few of the saints in whose lives we do not find some such unhistorical interval as this; and, if it makes no show on the pages of history, perhaps it may generally have been the most momentous period of their lives. Whether it has been spent in ascetic retirement or outward conflict, it has often been the season of probation, the vigil of their Christian knighthood, on which their whole future depended. Who knows what combats pass in these mystic deserts, or what gifts are won, communicating joy and health and sudden alacrity

to the whole body of Christ? St. Paul's days were not wasted in Arabia; and, to venture further, our Lord in St. Joseph's house was about His Heavenly Father's business. To us moderns this peculiarity in the lives of the saints may suggest very wholesome thoughts. It rebukes that restless temper which begins by making all our good unsound, because it sets up our own will rather than God's will as the rule of the good we propose to do; and ends by an irritable, schismatical, and carnal spirit of proselytism, and a fretful course of duty self-imposed, because through disuse it has lost all faith in its invisible weapons of prayer and fasting and virginity for Christ's sake. Yet this very characteristic of the saints' lives is, like most other things about them, singularly Christlike, reminding us of that silent but pregnant interval of eighteen years between His disputing with the doctors and His baptism by St. John, which the Evangelist comprehends in the one mystery of His obedience to His two creatures, St. Mary and St. Joseph, an interval wherein every day was full of actions which, because of the Incarnation, were infinite humiliations, and each one by itself, as Liguori says, *therefore* sufficient for the redemption of the world.

It was in the year 625 that the ambassadors of King Edwin, yet a pagan, arrived in Kent to demand of King Eadbald the hand of his sister Ethelburga in marriage. Tempting as was the offer, from Edwin's fame and his spreading conquests, the Kentish monarch replied that it was not lawful to give a Christian virgin in marriage to a heathen, lest the faith and sacraments of the Heavenly King

should be profaned by the company of a king who knew not the worship of the true God. Edwin was a man of no common temper, and with the natural sympathy which great minds have with high feelings took no offence at the rough answer. He sent a second time to promise that he would take no steps against the Christian faith, but that he would grant to the princess, her priests and her whole retinue, the free exercise of their own religion, and that should the new faith be found on examination holier and more worthy of God he would himself embrace it. This reply was considered satisfactory. Eadbald and Ethelburga might think it was a case to which the Apostle's rule would apply, that the believing wife should sanctify the unbelieving husband. Moreover, it would of course be remembered by both of them that it was a woman who had paved the way for the introduction of the Gospel into Kent, and that by her marriage with an unbeliever. And, doubtless, they acted under the advice of St. Justus, their spiritual pastor. He would view it in the light of a means for amplifying the Holy Church, and for such an end Ethelburga would be willing to venture her worldly comfort by placing herself in so difficult a position as that of a Christian queen in a heathen court.

It now became the duty of St. Justus to fix upon some new and worthy spiritual father, to whose care he should commit the Kentish princess, to guide her along the difficult way which for Christ's sake she was prepared to tread. He chose Paulinus, which would imply that he had already perceived

in him some eminent qualifications for positions of trust and difficulty. In compliance with the recommendation of St. Gregory, given so far back as 601, Paulinus was ordained Bishop of York, which See was to enjoy metropolitan honours. Of the life and demeanour of Paulinus in the heathen court we know next to nothing. But from what Bede says it would appear that he did not confine himself to building up Ethelburga and her Christian attendants in their most holy faith, but also laboured zealously as a missionary bishop. His labours at that time were not blessed with any great success; for while Bede testifies of him that he laboured long time in the Word, yet he adds that it fell out as the Apostle said, "The god of this world blinded the minds of them that believed not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine unto them." It is probable, however, that the exertions of Paulinus were silently bringing things into that mature state, which afterwards made the conversion of the Northumbrians almost national; for the very language used at the Conference of Godmundingham implies that the false religion had been for some length of time confronted with the Gospel, so that room had been given for a general scepticism to get root, and gain ground even among the priests.

Meanwhile Pope Boniface was not unmindful of his office of universal bishop, nor inclined to neglect the new church of St. Gregory's founding. In this same year he addressed letters to Edwin and Ethelburga, both of them noble compositions, and well deserving a place in that magnificent

collection of Christian documents, the pontifical epistles.

It is not a little touching to contemplate the affectionate earnestness of these two letters, and to reflect upon the high sense of duty which prompted and sustained so minute a vigilance over the interests of the Gospel throughout the breadth of Western Christendom. The marriages of the little kings of the Saxon heptarchy, with its fluctuating policy and its shifting boundaries, were not overlooked at Rome. "The piety of Boniface," says Alford,[1] "passed the Alps and ocean that he might hasten the reward of faith in the northern part of the island, and that the provincials of Alla, whom Rome had erewhile seen in her forum, might have a new commerce with the chief city. It was not, therefore, Gaul, it was not Spain, it was not Germany, it was not the nearer inhabitants of Italy, who were anxious for the salvation of the Northumbrians, for they had not the bowels of a parent; but it was Rome, to whom Christ had given the prefecture of His sheep in Peter the chief. She, though more remote in place, yet by the privilege of her dignity, by the necessity of her office, and finally by the excellency of her love, was nearer to us in this kind of affection. Hence the reader may clearly understand who is the genuine mother of this island, and to whom it owes the birth of faith, to eastern Asia, or to western Rome. Truly, if she only, in Solomon's judgment, was the mother, whose bowels were moved, then this pious care

[1] ii. 216, ed. Leod.

lest Britain should perish shows that, not of Asia or of Greece, but of Rome only ought we to say, 'She is the mother thereof.'"

It was now the second year of Paulinus's residence at the Northumbrian court. The interesting events of this year and the following (627), so well known through the touching narrative of St. Bede, belong rather to the life of St. Edwin, than of Paulinus, notwithstanding that they are among the most important which befell the holy bishop. The attempted murder of St. Edwin, the queen's safe delivery on the night of Easter Sunday, the king's victory over Quichelm, and the unlooked-for fulfilment of a heavenly vision, as they chiefly illustrate the personal character of St. Edwin, so they are related in his life. It is sufficient to say here, that the infant princess Eanflede, with twelve of her family, were the first-fruits of the Northumbrian mission, and were baptized on Whitsunday in 626; and that on Easter Sunday (627) King Edwin was himself baptized by Paulinus in his wooden cathedral, dedicated to St. Peter.

The six years which intervened between the baptism and the death of St. Edwin were in a Christian point of view most important to the north of England. It would seem as though the King made continual progresses through his dominions, taking Paulinus with him, and lending to his missionary labours the support of his presence and favour. First, going northward, we hear of the bishop being compelled to stop six-and-thirty days at one place in Northumberland, catechising the new converts, and baptizing them in the river

Glen, near the village of Yeverin, where Edwin had a country-seat. But it would seem from the narrative of Bede that he reaped a yet greater harvest in Yorkshire itself, where the pure and beautiful river Swale was his font, in whose rocky pools near Catterick Bridge, anciently Cataract, he baptized great multitudes of the Deiri, turning them, according to St. Gregory's prediction, from the wrath of God (de ira Dei). At Campodunum, where Edwin's palace stood, Paulinus built a church of stone, which was burnt by the pagans who killed St. Edwin. It was dedicated to St. Alban, for England had Christian antiquities even to the companions of St. Augustine; and Camden speaks of the black burnt appearance of the stones remaining in his day.

The conversion of the East Saxons and their king Eorpwald was brought about by the pious industry of Edwin, and seems to have taken place no long time[1] after his baptism. But the year after was marked by a still more signal success attending the preaching of Paulinus, in the conversion of Blecca, the Governor of Lincoln, and the introduction of the Gospel into the parts south of the Humber. At Lincoln he built another church of stone, of beautiful workmanship, which was roofless in Bede's time, but visited by the faithful because of the power of miracle which resided there. From Lincolnshire the holy bishop extended his missionary labours into Nottinghamshire, baptizing great multitudes in

[1] Father Cressy, however, puts it under 632, after Alford; yet the narrative of Bede would seem to bring it nearer to Edwin's baptism, and as if in the fervour of his recent conversion.

the river Trent, and consecrating a church to our blessed Lady at Southwell.[1] And thus our Saint became the father of three famous ecclesiastical buildings, which have come down to our times, the cathedrals of York and Lincoln, and the minster of Southwell.

The new church at Lincoln, even in its infancy, witnessed a scene of no little interest in English Church history, the consecration of Honorius, Archbishop of Canterbury, by St. Paulinus. It seems scarcely possible, in the conflict of authorities, to settle in what year this took place. Baronius is clearly right in saying that the pall was not sent to Paulinus before 633; and, apparently for the mere purpose of avoiding a difficulty, Harpsfield, Parker and Godwin fix the death of St. Justus to 634; but, as appears from the Pope's letter to St. Edwin in 633, Honorius was already Archbishop of Canterbury, and the pall is sent to the two archbishops at once. Justus died, according to the most probable account, in 628, and without supposing a vacancy of five years, it seems to agree better with the several narratives to fix the consecration of Honorius to 629; and either the original instructions from Rome, on which St. Justus acted in consecrating Paulinus, or fresh commands sent on the death of St. Justus, may have warranted Paulinus in consecrating Honorius, and the Pope's formal rule in 633, that when either of the archbishops returned to his Maker the survivor should ordain another in his room, may have been rather providing for a

[1] It is Camden's conjecture that the Tiovulfingacestir of Bede was Southwell.

difficulty already experienced than a mere rule enacted for the first time, and apart from circumstances. But, however the question of the date may stand, the fact is undoubted that the first Archbishop of York consecrated the fifth Archbishop of Canterbury in the new and beautiful stone church of Lincoln.

How briefly, and almost abruptly, does history appear to sum up in its straightforward narrative the work of six long years! Yet to monks, accustomed to hear what we should think the dry pages of the Martyrology read during their frugal meal, the list of names and places and simple facts could supply ample matter for devotional meditation. The mould in which the lives of all the Saints is cast, notwithstanding an apparently infinite diversity, is, after all, one and the same, the likeness of their Lord; and to men whose thoughts were conversant with that all day, each fact in the Martyrology was, so to speak, a key to itself. It opened out long trains of mingled thought and prayer, and cast the reader and the hearer more completely into the times and position of the Saint than laboured accuracy of description or animation of style could possibly do. To us, unfortunately, the connection between our own days and those of the Saints has been rudely sundered; and there is a romance about the past which goes far to destroy the real application of its ensamples to ourselves. Yet let any one, by a steady effort, realise to himself the rough, tiresome, commonplace difficulties which Paulinus had to overcome in evangelising our northern counties, the rudeness of the

times, the ignorance of the people, the inveteracy of their superstitions, their cold and unimpressive temper, so discouraging to a hot-hearted Roman, the want of clergy, the absence of all the consolations which a missionary derives either from the splendid ceremonial of the Church, or in these days from rapid communication with the faithful in other parts. These, and a host of others which these suggest, could only be overcome by the single-minded energy of earnest faith; and if multitudes, almost whole towns, exist now in those same northern counties to be rescued either from the delusions of schism, or even a neglected state of heathenism, the example of Paulinus may be of service to ourselves. A modern priest in a modern parish is first startled and then disheartened by the complicated errors of doctrine and discipline, and the end mostly is that he becomes entangled in some part of the vicious system round him, and, as though the world's eye paralysed him, learns to acquiesce in the wretched, low views and principles which prevail about him. Now, however seemingly different his outward position is, nevertheless it is substantially the same with that of a missionary; and faith in the Church system, even the little faith which he has, brings about changes which surprise himself. But they who are tied to the world are tied to the times, and the doctrine that this or that is unfit for these times eats out the very heart of faith. Hence it is that the most successful missionaries have generally been monks. Monks do not believe in the world; its ways do not fetter them; its example does not overawe them. They

do what we should call odd unpractical things, and, strange to say, these very things succeed through the hearty goodwill with which they are pushed forward; while the more intelligible discretion of their contemporaries receives the admiration of the world, and bequeaths nothing to posterity. Their singularity, like Samson's locks, appears to contain their strength.

Unlike the labours of many of the missionary Saints, the toils of St. Paulinus do not seem to have been accompanied, so far as we know, by any copious display of miraculous power; at least not in any such way as to have come strikingly forward to account for the great success of his preaching. The conversion of St. Edwin did certainly involve a supernatural knowledge of past circumstances; and the way in which St. Bede mentions the fame of the ruined walls of Lincoln Church, as gifted with a miraculous influence, would lead one to connect it with Paulinus.

But the time of his labours in the north was fast drawing to a close. A rebellion, for so it is termed by Bede, broke out against St. Edwin, headed by Cadwalla, the savage king of the Britons, whose Christian profession seems only to have exasperated him the more against the Saxons; and Penda, a man of the Mercian blood royal, and an idolater. A battle took place at Heathfield, near the banks of the Don. It was fatal to St. Edwin, who was slain there, and extremely disastrous to the Church; for it would appear as though it led to a complete persecution of the Northumbrian Christians. One would have imagined that Paulinus would have

remained with his Church, specially where there seemed so good a chance of winning the crown of martyrdom, for which the saints in all ages were athirst. This, however, was not the case. Reverting to his first office of guardian of Ethelburga, he took ship under the escort of Bassus, one of St. Edwin's most valiant warriors, and sailed into Kent. We have not enough information left us to decide upon the grounds of his retiring from the persecution. We know from the position he afterwards held in Kent that he was fully justified in what he did, and that his contemporaries saw nothing in his conduct inconsistent with his sanctity; and, of course, as in the case of the patriarchs of the Old Testament, we should in every instance fear to pass a censure upon any one whom the veneration of Catholics has canonised. The question of courting or shunning persecution was, we know, debated very early; and undoubted saints in quite primitive times adopted opposite lines of action. The example of our blessed Lord would seem on the whole to favour the shunning of persecution; yet as the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness to be tempted, and as another time He set His face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem, so doubtless the inward illumination of His Spirit guides His saints both when they advance and when they retire, as is so beautifully exemplified in the lives of St. Polycarp and St. Cyprian.

We must, therefore, follow Paulinus into Kent, not without casting a wistful and curious eye upon the deserted See of York and the young Northumbrian Church. History, however, is grudging of its

materials. There is the good and holy James, the deacon of Paulinus, who was seen helping his bishop to baptize the multitudes in the Trent; he is still on the banks of the Swale by Catterick Bridge, catechising and baptizing in spite of the persecution, "an ecclesiastical man and a holy, abiding long time in the Church of York, and rescuing much prey from the old enemy." His is the only figure visible on the scene; and yet a very interesting one, for the good deacon was a sweet singer, too, and he was permitted to see peace restored to his Church; and then, a delightful task! he taught the Yorkshire men to sing as they did at Rome and Canterbury, till at last he was very old; and then he followed the way of his forefathers; and the labours and the sufferings and the good deeds of James, the deacon of Paulinus, are hidden with Christ in God.

Thus Paulinus, after his eight years in the north, is now in Kent again; and we may be sure he was welcome to Honorius, whom he had consecrated himself at Lincoln; and we may be sure, too, that he had done what was right and holy in leaving York, for it chanced that when he came into Kent the See of Rochester was vacant, Romanus, the bishop, being drowned in the Mediterranean while on an embassy to Rome. St. Honorius, therefore, requested Paulinus, or rather, as Bede says, *invited* him, and King Eadbald seconded the invitation, to take charge of the widowed church of Rochester, for there was no controversy yet between the crosses of Canterbury and York. The ages of the Church when *crosses* struggled for precedence were

yet to come, and, bad as they were, compared with what had been, they were better a good deal than ages when crosses were put by altogether, because the world had settled all controversy between Canterbury and York by taking the precedence itself.

So Paulinus mounted the throne of Rochester; and as before he had laboured twenty-four years in Kent in silence and obscurity, so far as history can tell, he now labours in the same parts again for eleven years, edifying and consolidating the Kentish Church, we know not how, till in 644 he passed to heaven, "with the fruit of his glorious labour," and, like the prophet, bequeathed nothing but his mantle, the first pall of York, which he left to the Church of Rochester.

He does not seem to have been always resident at Rochester; perhaps he exercised episcopal superintendence in other parts, as a kind of spiritual vicar. For it appears that he lived for a considerable time at Glastonbury, where he caused the wattled walls of the old church to be taken down, and built up from the ground of solid timber, and covered with lead. Indeed, Paulinus seems to have been a great church-builder, raising and adorning the material fabric no less than building up the edifice of holy souls. This wooden church of Glastonbury remained as Paulinus left it, till it was burned down in the reign of Henry the First.

He died on the 10th of October, and was buried in the sacristy of the blessed Apostle St. Andrew, at Rochester. And we read (Capgrave ap. Cressy) that, when Gundulph was Bishop of Rochester,

Lanfranc took down the old church, and taking up the bones of St. Paulinus put them into a chest. There was present at this ceremony a woman grievously afflicted in body, and with her conscience burdened with a certain sin. At the sepulchre she vowed that, if by the merits of Paulinus God would free her from her disease, she would never again commit the sin of which she had been guilty; whereupon she was immediately healed.

Do we seem to have but little to say of so famous a Saint, and he, too, the first Archbishop of York, and the apostle of Northumberland? Do not let us think this: think what our island was in the first half of the seventh century: this good man left the quietness and the glory, the examples and the ceremonies of Rome, and laboured forty and three years for us English: forty and three years, let us count them out, and dwell on them in love, for it was not little which he did, witness York and Lincoln and Southwell; and though the Trent and the Swale and the Glen have flowed on and changed their waters many times, yet the souls regenerated in them are, in goodly sheaves we trust, laid up in the garner of the Lord. Therefore let us bless the memory of Paulinus, not only for the eight years' labour which we know of, but for the struggles and the toils of the silent thirty-five. Thus is it ever with the saints: what we know of them is but a sample of what they were; bunches of the grapes of Eshcol, brought out by the Holy Church for the wonder and veneration of her sons.

It is singular that such labours as those of Paulinus should have been so little illustrated by the working of miracles; and it is disappointing that no traits should have been recorded of his personal character which might have brought him nearer to us, who cannot even see the cross which Camden saw at Dewsbury on the Calder, with the brief but sufficient inscription, *Paulinus hic prædicavit et celebravit.* When we look back, all we see is what the old man saw who spoke with Deda, Abbot of Peartney, a bishop, at noonday on the banks of the Trent, very tall, with somewhat of a stoop, black hair, an emaciated face, a very thin and aquiline nose, with something both venerable and awe-inspiring in his aspect; and that was St. Paulinus of York baptizing the Nottinghamshire men.

THE LIFE OF

ST. EDWIN

KING OF NORTHUMBERLAND, A.D. 633

MOST beautiful is the diversity in the lives of the saints. Some shine apart, like single stars discerned through the clouds of a troubled night, while others gather in manifold constellations, touching one upon another in a line of shapely splendour across the sky, both equally, though in different ways, illustrating our Lord's gracious promise that He would be with His Church to the end of time. And, if in writing the lives of single saints it is hard to keep the biography from running into a general history of the age, so with a cluster of saints, living with and acting upon each other, it is hard to make the account of one complete without forestalling and borrowing from another. Thus in the life of St. Paulinus we have already virtually included much of the life of Edwin, and in the life of Edwin we must in like manner almost complete the life of his holy consort St. Ethelburga.

There is, however, in Edwin a very strongly marked personal character, much beyond what is common in the lives of saints of whose inward conflicts we know so little; and this will give an

interest to the narrative of quite a different kind from that which engages our attention to the life of St. Paulinus. In the one case it is the building-up of an infant Church, the beginnings of what was afterwards famous and magnificent; in the other it is the temper, the character, the actions, the changeful fortunes of the Saint himself.

Alla, the king of the Deiri, died in 589, leaving an infant son, three years old. This infant was St. Edwin, in whom was fulfilled the prophecy of St. Gregory that alleluias should soon be sung in the kingdom of Alla. Of course it was not likely in those times that an infant should take quiet possession of his hereditary throne, if indeed the Saxon thrones of that day could be called hereditary at all. Ethelfrid, the cruel king of the Bernicians, usurped the throne of Alla, and constituted himself the guardian of the young child. Without assuming any unusually rigorous treatment on the part of Ethelfrid, it is obvious that the position which Edwin occupied in his court would be likely to try and bring out the powers of his character, and, being a school of suffering, to form him in virtue and fit him for great things. The child grew up, eminent for virtues and winning graces, and so gained upon the affections of all that as he grew to man's estate he became an object of fear and jealousy to Ethelfrid. Meanwhile, he married Quenburga, the daughter of Ceorl the Mercian king. This possibly added to his influence, for soon after Ethelfrid, upon some false charge or other, banished Edwin from his court, notwith-

standing that Ethelfrid's own queen was Acca, Edwin's sister, through which marriage the tyrant had probably wished to give some appearance of legitimate right to his usurpation.

Under whatever irksome restraints Edwin had lived in the court, his life now became one of great suffering, want, and danger, which the company of Quenburga and his solicitude for her safety would greatly enhance. He lived in constant dread of assassination, and kept moving from place to place, disguised in a peasant's dress, until at length he threw himself upon the generosity of Redwald, the king of the East Angles, by whom he was hospitably and even royally entertained; and it was probably in the court of Redwald that his sons Offrid and Edfrid were born, and that their mother Quenburga died. His conduct while at the East Anglian court was such as to spread his fame all over the island, and it is said that reading shared with martial exercises all his leisure hours; though kings' courts were not the common homes for students in the seventh century. Of course his growing renown would make him still more an object of jealous hatred to the usurper Ethelfrid, who employed spies and assassins to take him off. By some means or other Edwin baffled his persecutor, till Ethelfrid came to the resolution of sending a messenger to Redwald to buy his guest. Redwald rejecting the odious offer, Ethelfrid menaced him with war, and ultimately so won upon the fears of Redwald that he consented to betray a single stranger rather than bring his whole kingdom into trouble. By the change in Redwald's demeanour Edwin perceived

that something was wrong, for persecution and living in the midst of enemies had greatly quickened his suspicions, and had bred in him a caution which is afterwards very perceptible in the matter of his conversion, yet wholly unaccompanied with coldness, as caution mostly is in base natures. Meanwhile a friend of Edwin's discovered the secret treaty made between Ethelfrid and Redwald; and coming into his chamber just as he was retiring to bed, in the first hour of the night, he informed him of his danger, saying, "If you wish, I will this very hour take you out of the province, and lead you into places where neither Ethelfrid nor Redwald shall be able to find you." But amid persecution Edwin had not learned distrust. He answered, "Truly I am obliged to you for your good intentions; but I cannot do what you suggest, and be the first to break the covenant which I have entered into with so great a king, seeing he has done me no ill yet, nor shown me any unfriendliness. Rather, if I must die, let him, sooner than a more ignoble person, deliver me to death. And, indeed, whither shall I fly, when for so many years I have gone as a vagabond through every province of Britain to evade the snares of my enemies?"

When his friend had left him, Edwin went forth and sat down sorrowful before the palace, perplexed with opposite thoughts, and at a loss what to do or which way to turn. He was probably by this time a widower, and that bereavement may have added to the natural pensiveness and hesitation which belonged to his character, and so long delayed his acceptance of the Gospel. It is scarcely

possible we should not hear of his queen afterwards, if she had not died before this; and, indeed, in his answer to his friend, mingling with a noble trust and a resolution to abide honourably by his promise, we may discover something of a broken spirit. Now, putting aside the Gospel, it is plain that in the world's acceptation of the term Edwin was no common man. Cradled in adversity, tried by the hourly irksomeness and petty rigours and disquieting restraints of Ethelfrid's court, proved yet more fiercely by the hardships of wandering and poverty, quietly dedicating his time to study, rather than either seeking his throne through busy schemes and plottings or burying his griefs in merriment and dissipation when harboured in the Court of Redwald, and, when the dark cloud came over him, keeping his honour, giving way to sadness rather than anger, a sadness, too, as his whole life testifies, no way akin to cowardice, the Northumbrian prince shone forth with virtues almost above a heathen. There had been to him a sanctification in suffering, even before he found the cross; and suffering, because it had not wrought in him selfishness and meanness and a low cunning, had wrought nobleness and tenderness and a trust in others.

The use he had made of God's dispensations, like the alms and prayers of the unregenerate Cornelius, earned him a further grace, though the great grace was still deferred. While he sat, in anguish of mind and with a half-unsettled purpose, before the palace of Redwald in the dark night, God looked down upon His creature whom He had ordained as a chosen instrument through whom to give the cross to the

Englishmen of the north. Suddenly there was a silence in the night, or something in the silence of an unwonted sort, which riveted his attention, and through the darkness he saw a person approach him, whom he knew not, and whose appearance for some reason or other, perhaps the instinctive knowledge and feeling of an unearthly presence, alarmed him not a little. The stranger drew near, and saluting him, asked him wherefore he sat wakeful upon the stone at an hour when others were in deep sleep. Edwin, with the abruptness of a startled person, said it was nothing to him whether he chose to pass the night in the palace or out of doors. The stranger answered: "Think not that I am ignorant of the cause of thy sadness and watching, and thy sitting here alone and out of doors. I know most surely who thou art, and wherefore thou grievest, and what ills thou fearest are nigh falling upon thee. But tell me, what reward wouldst thou give the man, if one there be, who shouldst free thee from these anxieties, and persuade Redwald neither to injure thee himself, nor deliver thee to thine enemies to be slain." Edwin replied that he would give all that he possessed to any one who should confer such a benefit upon him; whereupon the stranger said, "And what if he promise thee of a surety that thou shalt be a king, and overcome thine enemies, so that thou shalt excel in power not only all thine own ancestors, but even all those who have ever been kings in England?" Edwin, recovering his self-possession during these interrogations, promised without hesitation to reward most worthily any one who should confer such

benefits upon him. Then the stranger for the third time said, "If, however, he, who foretelleth thee such and so great goods as really about to come, can likewise counsel thee better and more wisely about thy life and salvation than any of thine ancestors or relations ever heard, wilt thou consent to obey him, and to follow his salutary admonitions?" Again Edwin unhesitatingly promised that he would follow in all things the teaching of the person who should from his present low estate raise him to a throne. When the prince had thus answered, the stranger laid his right hand on his head, saying, "When this sign shall be given unto thee, remember this hour and this discourse, and delay not to fulfil what thou hast now promised." Having uttered these words the stranger, whether it were an Angel of the Most High, or the spirit of a just man sent on that gracious embassy, disappeared so immediately as to convince the prince that he had held converse with some spiritual being.

Meanwhile God was making use of human instruments to bring about what his messenger had foretold. Redwald had communicated to his queen the secret agreement which he had made with Ethelfrid; but she, equally anxious for the honour of her royal husband and the safety of her guest, persuaded the king to abandon a design so unworthy of himself. Edwin was still sitting pensive and doubting, before the palace, when the same friend, who had warned him at nightfall, found him and gave him the welcome information of the change wrought in Redwald's purpose through the intercession of the

queen. Ethelfrid, enraged at the failure of his design, fulfilled his threat and made war on Redwald, who indeed had sent a personal defiance to Ethelfrid as soon as he had abandoned his first dishonourable intention: so short is the passage between a sinful purpose half formed, and what a man fancies is righteous indignation against his tempter! In this contest Edwin was no mean ally, for his prowess in riding and throwing the lance is specially mentioned among the causes of Ethelfrid's first jealousy against him. Redwald, scarcely giving the usurper time to muster his forces, gave him battle on the banks of the Idle in Nottinghamshire. Ethelfrid behaved with singular bravery, and with his own hand slew Rainer, the son of Redwald; this loss so exasperated the king of the East Anglians that, redoubling his efforts, he became master of the field. Ethelfrid was slain on the spot, and Edwin recovered his throne; while by the death of Rainer he likewise became heir to Redwald. Oswald and Ebba, the children of Ethelfrid, fled from the country, fearing the anger of their uncle Edwin, whose sister Acca was their mother. This battle is usually placed in the year 617, when Edwin was about thirty-one years old.

Edwin was not a likely person to forget the supernatural vision and the covenanted sign; much was fulfilled already, but there was more to come, and with his pensive disposition he doubtless pondered it often in his heart. Meanwhile his career of conquest began, and his fame was spread all round. In 620 he recovered the south-western parts of Yorkshire and the country about Leeds from

Cadwan, the king of the Britons, who had taken it, together with most of the modern diocese of Ripon, from Ethelfrid. In 621 he took advantage of a quarrel between Ferquhard, the Pictish king, and his nobles, and gained a considerable accession of territory. In the next year he made himself master of the islands of Anglesey and Man. In 624 Redwald died, and the people, passing over his son Erpenwald, offered their crown to Edwin. Edwin seems to have behaved towards Erpenwald with a generosity not common in those times, but worthy of his own noble character. He made himself lord paramount of the East Anglian kingdom, but left to Erpenwald the insignia of royal power. And now he assumed the title of Sovereign of the English nation, which Ethelbert had borne before. Thus rapidly and completely were the words of the heavenly messenger accomplished. The exile at the palace door at dead of night in seven short years is, and not by empty title only, Sovereign of the English nation: "For promotion cometh neither from the east nor from the west, nor yet from the south. And why? God is the Judge; He putteth down one, and setteth up another;" and Edwin was a chosen vessel in His hands for the welfare of our dear country.

Edwin was now resting from his conquests; and it seemed natural for a powerful monarch to wish to consolidate his kingdom, and to ally himself with another regal house. The resolution was natural, yet God was working in it; and through it the Divine purpose was secretly advancing towards its gracious end. In 625 it was that Edwin sent his

ambassadors into Kent to demand of Eadbald his sister Ethelburga in marriage. The first repulse which Edwin met with neither angered nor discouraged him. He was not one to esteem a bride the less highly because she preferred the dictates of conscience to a splendid alliance, or the honour of her God to her own aggrandisement. As we have seen in the life of St. Paulinus, consent was ultimately given, and St. Paulinus himself came with the royal virgin to preserve and build up the queen and her Christian attendants in their most holy faith. This marriage took place in the eighth year of the reign of Pope Boniface the fifth, and in that same year he wrote both to Edwin and St. Ethelburga. In his letter to the king he dwells upon the incomprehensibility of the Godhead, and holds up for Edwin's imitation the conversion of Eadbald his brother-in-law. He exhorts him to rid himself of idle and hurtful superstitions, but to take upon himself the sign of the cross, and not to refuse to listen to the preachers of the Gospel; and finally he presents him with a shirt with a single gold ornament upon it, and a garment of Ancyra, together with the blessing of the prince of the Apostles. This letter can hardly have failed to make a deep impression upon a mind so serious as Edwin's. The selfish, unzealous indifference of polytheism is notorious: the love of souls is a grace exclusively belonging to the Church of Christ. What then must Edwin have thought of the vast power of faith and the intense charity which such a phenomenon as the Papacy presented to the eye of a heathen? Rome had no interest in the matter. Here was no

priesthood to aggrandise, as men coarsely and stupidly speak; here were no revenues to be received, no secular claims to establish, no ambition to satisfy. On the very face of it Christianity came to the heathen as something so different from the manifold forms of false religion round them, as to arrest attention and engage inquiry; and it was the mysterious interest which the Roman bishop took in their conversion which was the most outward and striking characteristic of the new religion. It perplexed them; and their perplexity led them on; and this would not be lost upon one like Edwin.

Still he delayed. There was none of that greedy credulity, of that facile acquiescence, of mental weakness overawed by the tremendous doctrines of the Gospel, of an unreasoning appetite for prodigies, which people nowadays believe made up the characters of the old saints. On the contrary there is something quite striking, indeed one might almost say unaccountable, in the long hesitation of Edwin, and in the intellectual way (to use a modern word) in which he set about his inquiry. There is nothing on the face of the history which adequately explains it; for his whole life goes against the supposition of anything like a cold temperament or a distrusting heart. Rather one may conjecture the cause to have been this: that he was a very pious heathen, a religious man as far as he knew and believed, one who had sought consolation in religious observances during his long troubles, and whose thoughts from the pressure of circumstances had been a good deal turned towards the invisible world. This would agree with all we know of him,

and explain what is the most difficult point in his character. For to a man who first reads the history of Edwin's conversion there will mostly come a feeling of disappointment at the protracted hesitation and apparent indifference which he exhibited. But if our conjecture be true that he had been what men call a bigoted, that is, a sincere religionist in his dark way, even the wretched observances of his false faith would, and rightly, have no small value in his sight ; and, as he did not hold them cheap, he would not lightly abandon them. Supposing this to be the case, it is obvious that the daily quiet example of his Christian consort, and the eminent virtues of St. Paulinus, would help on his conversion more than miracles or startling Providences. He was not ready for them yet : doubtless the preparation of his heart had been long going on before St. Paulinus gave him the sign of the heavenly vision.

The growth of Edwin's power had not been observed by his neighbours without envy and disquietude, which led in 626 to an atrocious attempt on his life, on the part of Quichelm, the king of the West Saxons. He sent to Edwin a messenger of the name of Eumer, who found the king at Aldby on the Derwent, not far from York. While he pretended to be doing homage, the assassin suddenly drew a poisoned dagger from under his garment, and fell upon the king. Lilla, Edwin's favourite minister, threw himself between his master and Eumer, and the weapon passed through his body, making even a slight wound in Edwin's flesh ; and it was not until he had slain Forthhere, one of the

king's soldiers, that the murderer was slain himself. This narrow escape was on Easter Sunday. It happened that St. Ethelburga was at that time pregnant and near to her delivery, and the shock bringing on the pains of travail[1] she was that night delivered of a daughter named Eanflede. Edwin, in the presence of St. Paulinus, returned thanks to his false gods for the queen's safe delivery; but the Saint boldly affirmed the blessing to have been an answer to some special prayers of his. The Bishop's life had been such as to clear him from any suspicion of craft or untruth, and his words made a deep impression on the king. It is said that Edwin took pleasure in his words, and promised that he would renounce his idols and serve Christ, if, as a sign, victory was accorded to him over the base Quichelm, and, as a present earnest, he delivered the infant princess to St. Paulinus to be consecrated to Christ. She, with twelve others of her family, was baptized on the following Whitsunday, to the joy of Paulinus and the great consolation of St. Ethelburga.

At Whitsuntide the king, being recovered of his wound, notwithstanding the poison in which the blade had been dipped, marched against the West Saxons, and by God's help utterly subdued his enemies. Yet not even then did he perform the promise which he had given to St. Paulinus.[2] A

[1] Such is the way in which Bede's narrative is usually taken; both Alford and Cressy take it so, but Alban Butler makes the birth of the daughter to have been on Easter Eve, which suits Bede's word *pepererat* much better, and what he says afterwards of the easy delivery.

[2] The *quo tempore* of Bede would seem to imply that the letters of Pope Boniface came during Edwin's suspense after his victory over Quichelm: but the victory was in 626, and that was the first year of the pontificate of Honorius.

change of religion seemed a grave matter even to a conscientious heathen. He did not forget or neglect his promise, but he made Paulinus instruct him in the Christian faith on the one hand, while on the other he conferred with the wisest persons of his court on this momentous subject. The natural pensiveness of his disposition showed itself very strongly; for not content to be instructed and to hold conferences, he withdrew a great deal from public, and sat by himself for long together in silent conflict. Perhaps what he had seen in the court of Redwald was a stumbling-block in his way, and had done an injury to the cause of Christ in Edwin's mind. For Redwald had himself received the sacrament of regeneration in Kent, but on his return to his own country was seduced from the faith, and in the darkness of his mind professed both the Gospel and idolatry at once, having a temple wherein was one altar to Christ, and a "*small*" one, a characteristic difference, whereon to sacrifice to devils. This would of course bring about a very wretched state of things among the East Saxons, and would be not unlikely to take from the majestic and imposing appearance of the Gospel in Edwin's mind, even when it was afterwards brought before him as it really is in itself. The heavenly vision, also, would doubtless be continually in his mind during these silent retirements and lonely meditations. The oracle had been amply fulfilled in all that was promised to temporal dignity and extended sway; what was there in the circumstances about him which might be a fulfilling of the part which spoke of salvation? What had come

nigh him or gathered round him, apart from his increased dominions and magnificence? A Christian queen, a handful of Kentish believers, an Italian bishop—what were these to the Northumbrian king? What place had they in the designs of Heaven? Were they connected with the vision? Truly Edwin had need to sit alone and be silent: he was in the hand of God; the shadow of the cross fell upon his very hearth, and he was beginning to perceive it.

But now the hour of grace was come. Whether it were that some prayer of perplexity was that moment offered up, we know not; but while he sat alone, and pondered the new religion, the vision came and found him out. St. Paulinus entered, laid his right hand on his head, and guided by divine inspiration, asked him if he knew that sign. Edwin recognised the token; he trembled like an aspen leaf, and would have fallen down at the bishop's feet. But the holy man raised him up, and with an encouraging manner addressed him thus: "See, you have by God's assistance escaped the enemies whom you feared; behold, you have through His bounty received the kingdom which you desired. Take heed that you delay not that third thing which you promised, namely, to embrace the faith and keep the commandments of Him who hath out of temporal distresses raised you to a temporal kingdom, and who will also free you from the perpetual torments of evil and make you partaker with Himself of His heavenly kingdom, provided only you henceforth conform yourself to His will, which I preach to you." Edwin replied

that he was ready at once to submit to the faith of Christ, which the bishop taught.

But it seemed a small thing to him, after all his delay and these convincing proofs, to come empty-handed, so to speak, to the holy sacrament. He would fain his friends and counsellors should share with him the grace of God and the benefits of the blessed laver. He proposed, therefore, to hold a conference with his nobles, and endeavour to persuade them to come with him to be cleansed in Christ, the fount of life. This famous conference took place at Godmundingham, not far from York. The nobles doubtless had many times been present at the preaching of St. Paulinus, for Edwin assumed that they knew something of the new religion proposed to them. He began by asking them all round what each one thought of the unheard-of doctrine and new worship of the Divinity which was proposed. The chief priest, Coifi, was the first who answered, "See, O king, what manner of thing this is which is now preached to us; for I candidly profess that for what I see the religion we have held hitherto has neither power nor profit in it. None of your subjects has more studiously attended to the worship of the gods than myself, and yet there are many who receive greater gifts and higher dignities from you than I do, and succeed better in all matters where anything is to be achieved or gained. Now if the gods were worth anything, of course, they would rather help me, who have served them so carefully. Wherefore, if we find on examination the new things, which are preached to us, worthier and stronger, let us make as much

haste as ever we can to receive them." It was an odd test which poor Coifi hit upon to try a religion, and his disappointed ambition comes to the surface with a very natural, if not dignified, candour. Yet after all, though it has seldom been related without a passing sneer, is the unhelpfulness of the idols set forth in so very different a way from what it is on more than one occasion in the Old Testament?

Another of the king's chief counsellors, assenting to the words of Coifi, said, "O king, the present life of man on earth seems to me, in comparison of the unknown time, as though when you are sitting at supper with your generals and counsellors in the winter time, when the fire is kindled in the midst and the room made warm, while out-of-doors the wintry rain and snow are whirling about, and a sparrow comes and flies quickly through the hall, coming in at one door and escaping by another. For the moment during which it is within, it is not touched by the winter storm, but the little space of quiet being run out in a moment, it glides back into the winter whence it came. So seems man's life for a while, but what shall follow or what went before, we know nothing of. Wherefore if this new doctrine inform us any the more certainly about it, it seems worthy of being followed."

The council seems to have been quite unanimous: what Coifi had said would doubtless come home to some; while the touching confession of ignorance, so beautifully made by the nameless speaker, would find the better natures, and be as it were a voice to what they had all along been feeling. Coifi, however, as was natural in a priest, wished to hear St.

Paulinus more at length, on the subject of the new faith. The holy bishop, at the king's command, having addressed the council, Coifi exclaimed, "I have long perceived that there was nothing in what we have been worshipping, because the more diligently I sought for truth in that worship, the less I found it. But now I openly declare that in this preaching shines forth that truth which is able to give us life, salvation, and eternal blessedness. Wherefore I propose, O king, that we immediately curse and burn the temples and altars which we have fruitlessly consecrated."

Thus ended the famous debate of Godmundingham; and before the council broke up, Edwin gave St. Paulinus liberty to preach the Gospel, and openly renouncing idolatry, he proclaimed his own submission to the faith of Christ. Then arose the question, who was to desecrate the enclosures of the idol temples? the ardent Coifi offered himself for that service, "for," said he, "who is fitter than myself to give that example to all, and to destroy, through the wisdom that God hath given me, those things which I worshipped in my folly?" So saying, he requested of the king arms and a stallion, thereby to show more signally his contempt for his former superstitions, which forbade a priest to carry arms, and allowed him to ride on a mare only. Then he went forth with his lance in rest, and rode to the idol temple. The people, seeing his strange unpriestly guise, believed he was gone mad; but when he approached the temple he threw his spear into it, and, "much rejoicing in the acknowledgment of the true God," he gave orders to his com-

panions to burn the temple with all its enclosures. And thus fell the false gods of the Yorkshiremen, to rise again, yet only for a little while.

The facility with which in this and some other cases a large body of people renounced their ancient religion has sometimes provoked a sneer. Yet surely most unreasonably. To deem the persons so converted insincere or indifferent is to underrate the divine character of the Gospel, and to disbelieve the promise which Christ made of being ever with His Church: that a sudden inspiration should light upon a multitude of men is, of course, in one sense miraculous; but does not the Gospel lead us to look for miracles in the conversion of the heathen? and, when we call such a thing miraculous, do we mean anything further than that it is a more palpable display of God's power than the equally supernatural work of convincing the intellect and preparing the heart of an individual? It does not follow that Edwin's conversion was the only sincere one, because in his case only we know something of the protracted processes through which he was brought to the knowledge of the truth and the acceptance of it. The nameless speaker at the conference would probably imbibe the faith more readily than Edwin, from his imaginative turn of mind and the melancholy tenderness so visible in his speech. Neither must we forget, what history, of course, can take no cognisance of, the daily operation of the preaching of Paulinus, the example of Ethelburga, the converse of her Christian attendants, the sight of Christian ceremonial, the presence of Christian

emblems. The fact that, as Bede says, the nobles universally submitted to the faith, and also a great many of the people, may perhaps intimate that the movement began—just where all these things were more specially present—in the court, and how long it may have been going on even before the conference of Godmundingham, of course we cannot tell.

Notwithstanding Edwin's many conferences with St. Paulinus, he required a yet more perfect instruction in the mysteries of the faith, before he was fit to receive the sacrament of regeneration. During this interval he had a wooden church, or oratory, erected at York, which was to be the chief city of the bishopric. It was on Easter Sunday, which in 627 fell on the 12th of April, that Edwin was baptized in the wooden church dedicated to St. Peter; and either then, or shortly afterwards, his sons Offrid and Eadfrid, which Quenburga bore him in his banishment, were also received into the Christian Church, and Iffi, the son of Offrid. His sons Ethelhun and Wuscfrea, and his daughter Etheldrith, the children of St. Ethelburga, were all afterwards baptized; but Ethelhun and Etheldrith, says Bede, were taken out of this life in their baptismal white, and buried in the church at York. A large and noble church of stone now began to rise over the wooden oratory; six years was Edwin building it, yet when he died the wall had not reached its proper height, and the completion of it was reserved for his great successor, St. Oswald. The success which the Gospel had in Northumberland, the labours of St. Paulinus in Yorkshire, the

conversion of Lincolnshire, and the building of Southwell in Nottinghamshire, are the chief events of the next six years, and belong rather to the life of the bishop than of the king. Edwin seems to have had a taste for magnificence; for not only in war, but also in peace, his banners were borne before him, and even when he walked the streets the ensign, called by the Romans Tufa, was borne before him. There was probably as much wise policy as personal love of dignity, in general so distasteful to the saints, in this practice. Indeed, he seems to have been a most able king, and the account of the state of his dominions is very unlike our usual notion of the northern counties of England in the seventh century. It was said, proverbially, that a woman with her new-born child might traverse the island from sea to sea, and no one hurt her. Whenever he perceived a clear spring near the highway, such was his paternal solicitude for the good of his people that he had stakes driven into the ground, and brazen saucers hung upon them, that they who travelled by might slake their thirst—a beautiful instance of his characteristic thoughtfulness! And such was the mingled dread and affection which he inspired that no one dared to injure or remove the vessels.

In 632 the holy father Honorius, who at that time ruled the Apostolic See, sent a letter of exhortation to Edwin, in which he greatly praises his orthodoxy and the inflamed fire of his faith, and warns him to persevere to the end in order that he may reach the blessed mansions of the world to

come, and then says, "Be ofttimes occupied in the reading of your preacher, my lord Gregory, of apostolical memory, and keep before your eyes the zealousness of his doctrine, which he willingly employed for your souls, so that his prayers may augment your realm and people, and present you unblamable before Almighty God." The Pope at the same time sent palls to Honorius of Canterbury, and Paulinus.

The life and reign of Edwin now drew to a close. In 633 a rebellion broke out against him, the chiefs of which were Cadwalla, the British king, and Penda, one of the Mercian blood royal. A battle took place at Heathfield, on the Don, on the 12th of October. The contest was severe: Offrid, the gallant son of Edwin, making a fierce charge upon the enemy, was killed; and the king himself was shortly afterwards slain by the hand of the heathen Penda, whence he has been honoured with the title of Martyr. He died in the 47th year of his age, and the 17th year of his reign. After the admonition of Pope Honorius it is interesting to read that the head of Edwin was brought to York, and was buried in the porch of the new church, named, in affectionate honour of the great pontiff, the porch of St. Gregory.

The life of St. Edwin does not seem like a story of the seventh century. But if it is devoid of the interest borrowed from the signs and wonders which in so many cases it pleased the Head of the Church to work by the hands of His saints, it has a special edification of its own for our times. To our narrow view it appears as though the age of

miracle and prodigy and strange interventions and unearthly judgments was of necessity destitute of scrutiny, firmness, delay, intellectual hesitation, and the conscientious exercise of humble judgment. Now it is only necessary to put St. Edwin's life by the side of St. Oswald's to see how false this is. Both were eminent saints; the lives of both are for the most part drawn from the same sources; yet one seems to move along a track of miracles, the other to exhibit the gradual submission of a powerful intellect to the faith of Christ. In a word, there is, in appearance, something *modern* about St. Edwin's life, such as may, to a certain class of minds, suggest thoughts which it were well they should improve upon.

THE LIFE OF
ST. ETHELBURGA

QUEEN, A.D. 633

WITH what tenderness does Holy Church console the faithful by retrieving the good from out the disheartening multitude of evil, and in holyday and liturgy exposing it, as though it were some precious relic, to the veneration of Catholics in the lives of the saints! We learn to reverence the memory of the holy bishop who founded the Northumbrian church; we follow him amid his labours, from the Swale to the Glen, from York to Lincoln, from Lincoln to Nottingham. He did his part of the work. But neither do we forget the great and strong-minded Edwin; he was a king; he had his work to do, and he did it in a kingly way. One would think the mitred clerk and the crowned layman were enough to keep alive in our minds the great mercy of God in planting the cross in the north of England. But no! the eye of the Church finds out the gentle queen, the saintly Ethelburga, passing her silent years in the court of a heathen husband. Had not she, too, her work to do? And did she not do it? And had she not a very noble heart? So she, too, is given us to venerate.

Though we know but little of her, that little is enough to give us wholesome thoughts; and though her meek life is told in her husband's life, yet there is enough about her to let her shine like a star apart, a star not to be overlooked, because an essential feature in the holy group of Edwin and Paulinus, Oswald, Aidan, and Oswin, and the rest who in that century worked the work of God in the dark North.

The Church, who every vespers recites the Magnificat of our blessed Lady, could not overlook the holy women, the ascetic virgins, the pure wives, the saintly mothers, who, like Mary, have in one sense conceived the Lord, and brought Him forth anew to His Church in every age. The Gospel came into Kent through a woman; it came into Yorkshire through a woman too; and as by a blessed woman the world received the Saviour, so has it been said that nothing great has been done in the Church but what a woman has had part therein. "For first many of them descended into the amphitheatres with the martyrs; others disputed with the anchorets the possession of the desert. Presently Constantine unfolded the Labarum on the Capitol, while St. Helena raised the cross on the walls of Jerusalem. Clovis at Tolbiac invoked the god of Clotilda; the tears of Monica redeemed the errors of Augustine. Jerome dedicated the Vulgate to the piety of two Roman ladies, Paula and Eustochium. St. Basil and St. Benedict, the first legislators of the monastic life, were succoured by Macrina and Scholastica, their sisters. Later on, the Countess Matilda sustained with her chaste hands the tottering throne

of Gregory the seventh. The wisdom of Queen Blanche administered the realm of St. Louis ; Joan of Arc saved France ; Isabella of Castille presided over the discovery of the New World. To come nearer still to our own times, one sees St. Theresa mingling with a group of bishops, doctors, and founders of Orders to work a thorough reformation of Catholic society. St. Francis of Sales cultivated the soul of Madame de Chantal as a chosen flower, and St. Vincent of Paul confided to Louisa de Marillac that most admirable of his designs, the establishment of the Sisters of Charity."[1] And amid this galaxy we may dare to place our English Ethelburga.

St. Ethelburga was the daughter of King Ethelbert, of blessed memory, and of his queen Bertha. Her life was, as it were, her mother's life over again. Bertha, with her Bishop Luidhard, consented to yoke herself with a heathen husband for the Lord's sake and the amplifying of His Church; her daughter Ethelburga, with the Bishop Paulinus, did for York what her mother had done for Canterbury. What a sweet picture it is, a Christian virgin led like a lamb to a lot from which her own heart shrunk, but with a shepherd by her side, a Christian bishop, to keep her from the wolves ! What a contrast to the rudeness and the wassail and the strife of a heathen court ! Fair as the moon, yet for the inward might of truth terrible as an army with banners, and each of the two finally enslaving the kingdoms whither they were led ! We know nothing

[1] Ozanam. Philos. Cath. du xiii. siècle, ap. Ratisbonne. Vie de S. Bernard, i. xxxv.

of the early years of Ethelburga. There can be little doubt but that she was most tenderly guarded by her mother, and most carefully instructed by St. Luidhard. The obstinate refusal of her brother Eadbald to submit to the faith would render her still more precious in the eyes of Bertha, and she doubtless grew up in secret holiness. How she passed the interval between Eadbald's accession and his conversion we do not know; but here also there can be but little doubt that the eye of St. Laurence would watch over the princess with the vigilance of a father and the affection of a mother, while the idolatry and incest of her brother daily vexed her righteous soul. Her girlhood, therefore, was hardly spent in peace. She witnessed scenes which must have aided materially in forming her character and establishing her faith; and we are not taken by surprise either at the first indignant impulse with which she rejected the hand of Edwin, nor at her unhesitating compliance when it came before her in the light of a sacrifice for the love of God. A fearful sacrifice indeed, for what honour, peace, comfort, could there be for the Kentish virgin in the court of the heathen North! What consolation in the prospect of a mother's office, or what certainty of ultimately doing good, when her husband was such an one as the strong warrior, the proud conqueror, the pomp-loving king!

But she made the sacrifice; she went forth; Paulinus was her Luidhard; and York became as Canterbury, a conquest of the faith. Yet think of her position as a queen before her husband's conversion; what numberless positions of a distressing

kind would she be placed in almost daily, from the mere force of circumstances! What temptations to act one way for peace sake, when truth led her the other! What perplexing questions of compliance or non-compliance! What a puzzle to draw the line between singularity and concession! And a *woman* to be placed in such a position! Yet by her unaffectedness and boldness, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, God's Providence overshadowing her in the person and presence of St. Paulinus, she came forth triumphant. Her life is rather to be imagined than told; her feelings at the attempted assassination of St. Edwin, at the baptism of Eanflede, at the conversion of the king, may readily be conceived. And then those six years of royal progresses, of riversides thronged with candidates for baptism, of good Paulinus preaching and converting up and down, of the fair minster of York rising higher and higher, a Christian queen the ornament of a Christian court, a Christian mother with her children Christians also, what happiness was hers; happiness earned by humble efforts, and enjoyed with like humility! Three canonised saints meeting in almost daily converse, a king, a bishop, and a queen; unconscious as the saints ever are of their own high endowments, and who would have been stricken to the ground at the thought of being hereafter venerated by the Catholics of all times and lands—what a picture it is, a page of the seventh century!

Those six years were not a dream. Yet they were but a transient reality. They came in the middle of her life like a bright noon between two

storms; yet doubtless they developed many graces which had been sown during adverse times and difficult trials. However, sunshine seldom lasts long with saints; the Gospel is a religion of suffering, for this plain reason, that to suffer is to be Christlike. Edwin was slain; the wild beasts were loose in the Northumbrian church; and her shepherd Paulinus withdrew her from their fangs. History has preserved the name of Edwin's favourite captain, the loyal Bassus, beneath whose escort the bishop and the queen took ship, and coasted England till they came to Kent. Her welcome from Eadbald would doubtless be all which a sister would require. But Ethelburga had done with courts; she had entered one only for the love of God and in conformity to His will; and when she now dedicated herself to the monastic state, was she not probably doing nothing more than reverting to the wishes of her younger days, fulfilling in Kent in her widowhood what she had perhaps thought of in Kent in her virginity? Her children disposed of, she built a monastery at Lîming with Eadbald's consent and assistance, and gave herself up to holy poverty. She is said to have been the first Saxon widow who took the veil, and in the Martyrology is called the Mother of many virgins and widows. She put on her earthly crown for the love of Christ, she wore it for His Church, she put it off for the greater love she bore Him, and she now reigns with Him in heaven. May her merits and intercession avail with Him for those fair districts of the North among which she went as an obedient Angel to plant the blessed Rood!

THE LIFE OF

ST. OSWALD

KING AND MARTYR, A.D. 642

ST. EDWIN and St. Oswald were uncle and nephew by blood; they were in their political relations what the world calls enemies; and they were both saints in the Catholic Church. For the Church knows nothing of time or place or temporary relations, but gathers up all that was holy and self-denying and Christlike in the past, and solemnly enshrines it for the comfort and support of her children in all ages. We may now pursue the history of the Northumbrian Church in the life of St. Oswald.

It will be remembered that when King Ethelfrid was slain, and St. Edwin gained possession of his throne in 617, Ethelfrid's three sons, Eanfrid, Oswald, and Oswy, fled into Scotland, which was to be to them what the court of their father had been to St. Edwin, a school of adversity, training them to fill high places. In Scotland they learned the Christian faith, and received the sacrament of regeneration. From Oswald's subsequent intercourse with the Scotch we may gather that the youthful princes found a kind and hospitable refuge

there, and that the time of their banishment was not on the whole a period of suffering and hardship. St. Bede speaks as though Oswald had been personally popular with his hosts. On the death of St. Edwin the three princes naturally returned home, as Edwin's queen and youthful children had retired into the south. Osric, the cousin of St. Edwin, and a convert of St. Paulinus, succeeded to the kingdom of the Deiri, and Eanfrid, the eldest son of Ethelfrid, to the throne of Bernicia. Both kings, deprived of the safeguard of adversity, fell away from the faith, and returned to the licentious abominations of idolatry. Meanwhile the Northumbrian Church and kingdom were being laid waste by the fierce and brutal Cadwalla, who slew Osric the summer after his accession, being made the instrument of Heaven to punish that unhappy king's apostasy. Soon after, Eanfrid, going to Cadwalla with only twelve soldiers in order to sue for peace, was also cruelly put to death; and Oswald became the rightful monarch of the Northumbrians.

Nothing could appear to human eyes less hopeful than the infant Church of Paulinus after the death of St. Edwin: the holy archbishop himself gone on other duties: the kingdom divided, and that between two apostates: and the country occupied by the ruthless invader Cadwalla. The light of the Gospel seemed well-nigh extinct. Such a terrible impression did that year leave upon people's minds that it was called the accursed year; and historians, with a common consent as touching as it is significant, shrank from reckoning it as the

reign of Osric and Eanfrid, but added it as a ninth year to the eight of St. Oswald. But it is mostly when a branch of His Church is shorn of human powers, like Gideon's army, that God is pleased to intervene, in order that men may acknowledge, what they are ever forgetting, that the Church is a divine institution and that all our strength and all our gifts are from above. He had taken St. Edwin to Himself: St. Paulinus was removed, absent in body though doubtless powerfully present in spirit, and the intercessions of the dead and the living were heard in behalf of the Church those two saints had planted. St. Oswald was raised to carry on the work which St. Edwin had begun, and to carry it on in a manner so different as to lead us to muse on the Divine government of the Church. Considering that it was the foundation of a new Church among a people of strong feelings, fierce prejudices and rugged ways, it is, to say the least, very striking that there should have been such a comparatively small display of miraculous powers. The calm, dubious, searching, contemplative, intellectual spirit which reigns through the lives of Saints Edwin and Paulinus, and comes uppermost in the famous conference held by the king, is certainly not what we usually find to prevail during the beginnings of the faith amid a barbarous nation. It gives a very special and marked character to the rise of the Northumbrian Church. But when we pass from the days of Edwin to those of Oswald, we enter quite a different atmosphere. The Church lived on through the lonely ministrations of James the

deacon, whose spirit was possibly cheered by some such supernatural assurance as Elijah received of the many among the people who had not bowed the knee to Baal. And with the accession of Oswald the mighty Hand and stretched-out Arm come forth visibly in behalf of the Church. Miracles and visions abound. The personal character of the king seems almost lost in the display of supernatural interference. The wide possessions and extended power of St. Edwin, won by active sagacity and assiduous enterprise, are regained by the austere, ascetic Oswald.

Seventeen years Prince Oswald spent in banishment among the Scots; and it was probably in 635 that his brother Eanfrid was murdered. The apostasy and punishment of Osric and Eanfrid would of course make a deep impression on the pious mind of Oswald; and the quiet confidence of faith with which he appears to have acted might lead one to suppose that he looked upon the recent disasters as rising rather from his brother's sin than from Cadwalla's power, and that he feared God's anger more than the invader's overwhelming force. Immediately on Eanfrid's death he collected what few forces he could, and encamped against Cadwalla near the brook called Denisburn, at no great distance from the Roman wall. His "little flock of kids," like Israel before the army of Benhadad, were in no wise dismayed: their leader, says William of Malmesbury, was armed with faith rather than weapons: justice and the blessing of God were his allies. He had learned his faith amid the zealous and devout Scots, and the celestial guardians of

that people were now permitted to succour and console him. The evening before the battle, and close to Cadwalla's camp, Oswald caused a rude cross of wood to be reared, and with his own hands held it up while the cavity was filled in with earth. No sooner did it stand erect than the king cried out to the army with a loud voice, "Let us all bend our knees, and pray unto the Lord, omnipotent, living and true, to defend us by His pitifulness from our proud and fierce enemy; for He Himself knoweth that our war is a just war for the safety of our nation." When the king's devotions were finished he retired to his tent; and during the night slept peacefully, as being in the hands of God and beneath the custody of good angels. As he slept St. Columba appeared to him, and assured him, not only of victory on the morrow, but also of a happy reign. The vision Oswald himself related to Failbey, Abbot of Iona, who told it to St. Adamnan, his successor; and it is by him inserted in his life of St. Columba.[1] At break of day the battle took place, when Oswald obtained a complete victory, and the Cumbrian tyrant was left dead on the field. The name of the place where the battle was fought was Heven-feld, or Heaven's Field, a name which, as St. Bede says, was a sort of prophecy that in times to come the sign of our redemption should be set up there. The exact site is not known, but it appears to have been only a few miles from Hexham.

This, like St. Edwin's battle on the river Idle, was

[1] Chaloner, ii. 67. Brit. Sanct.

a new beginning for the Northumbrian Church; only that, as Oswald's life was full of wonders, so his reign commenced with the setting up of this famous and wonder-working cross at Hevenfeld. So many and great were the miracles wrought both at the place and by fragments of the cross, that in Bede's time it was common to cut off small chips of the wood and soak them in water, and men or cattle diseased were healed either by drinking of the water or being sprinkled with it. The monks of Hexham were wont to repair thither on the eve of St. Oswald's martyrdom, to keep the vigil there for the health of his soul, to sing psalms, and say mass for him in the morning. This ritual would, of course, assume a different form in proportion as the Church, by miracles wrought by God at St. Oswald's intercession or through means of his relics, came to ascertain that he was admitted into the noble army of martyrs. One of the miracles wrought by St. Oswald's cross took place in Bede's own days. One of the monks of Hexham, whose name was Bothelm, walking incautiously on some ice during the night, fell and broke his arm. The fracture was such as to cause the most excruciating pain; and hearing that one of the brethren was going to Hevenfeld, he asked him to bring him a piece of the venerable wood, saying, that he had faith that God would heal him by means of it. In the evening the monk returned; the patient seems to have been in the refectory with the rest, and the monk gave him some old moss which he had scraped from the surface of the wood, which seems to imply a carefulness lest the cross should be consumed by the

frequent cutting of chips from it. Bothelm at the time put the moss into his bosom, and for some cause or other omitted to take it out when he lay down to sleep. But in the middle of the night he awoke, feeling something cold touching his side; and reaching out his hand to ascertain what it was, he found his arm restored whole as if it had never been broken.

Oswald was now in full possession of the Northumbrian kingdom; and his first care was to provide for the Church. The first foundation of it had been in the southern province at York, and that by a Roman missionary: the second foundation was in the northern province, and by Scotch missionaries opposed to the Roman rites and customs. On looking round him Oswald found indeed a Church, but without a ruler. We might have supposed it would have been most natural for him to have recalled St. Paulinus: but either there were political objections to that, as the archbishop was the guardian of St. Edwin's children, or Oswald himself might be prejudiced in favour of the Scottish usages. Anyhow he betook himself to the Scotch Church for missionaries. This might have been a serious thing for the future welfare of the whole Saxon Church; and it is never to be forgotten that the averting of schism and the restoration of uniformity by submission, as was most natural, to the Roman customs, were among the obligations we are under to St. Wilfrid, aided surely in no small degree by the dying injunctions of the great St. Cuthbert, himself a Scot, and brought up in Scottish usages.

There appears to have been, even at that time,

the same national character in the Scotch Church, the same mixture of zeal and obstinacy, of austerity and harshness, which distinguished it in after days, and which came out so fearfully in the great struggle, when almost the entire nation threw off the yoke of Christ. The whole conduct of the dispute about Easter and the tonsure was strongly marked with the Scotch characteristics. A backwardness to adapt itself to circumstances, something like fierceness, an inclination to sectarianism, were from time to time apparent, compensated by a devout adherence to old traditions, a hatred of change, a steadfast orthodoxy, a very high standard of holiness, a severe asceticism. No two tempers could be more opposed than those of the Churches of Rome and Scotland at the time of which we are now writing, and there can be little doubt which was the higher and more Catholic of the two. Yet Bede himself, who was very far from underrating the differences, bears testimony to the noble and self-denying character of the Scotch missionaries, and the extreme devotion of their lives.

It was to this Church of Scotland, his own mother in the faith, that Oswald now turned; and from which came forth a company of saints, whose names are still held in deserved esteem, reverence, and love among the inhabitants of the northern shires of England. To the old Scotch Church England owes Lindisfarne, and therefore all the Catholic glories of the palatinate of Durham.

Oswald's first request for a missionary was answered by the sending of Corman. His mission entirely failed, and he himself retreated into Scot-

land. It does not exactly appear what the cause of his failure was. Some attribute it to his ignorance of the Saxon language; but from his own complaint it would rather seem that he had endeavoured to introduce all at once a severe discipline which the untutored minds and rough natures of the Saxons could not endure. He seems to have been deficient in winningness; and to have been unequal to the task of so blending suavity with strictness as not to introduce laxity. He comes out quite as the representative of the less pleasing characteristics of the old Scotch Church. There is nothing which the world has so doggedly continued to misunderstand as the conduct of missionaries among barbarians and misbelievers. It is ever demanding in their conduct towards their converts a strictness which it calls gloom and bigotry when brought near to itself; and unable to comprehend the pliancy there is in Christian wisdom, and what a depth there is in the very simplicity of its policy, men cry out against what they call lax accommodations and a betraying of the truth. Yet it is not a little significant that the very persons who have been mostly accused of this have been in their treatment of themselves most self-denying and austere. A strict discipline is not the remedy for a long chronic disorder of laxity and remissness. It amounts to an excommunication; and destroys souls by repelling them from the very shadow of the influence under which its object is to bring them. Of course it is a difficult thing to raise the standard of holiness in a church, a see, a parish, or a monastery, without somewhat terrifying the minds of men; yet it is

possible, and it is needful, to find the means of doing so without the sudden introduction of such a severe and ascetic discipline as one hopes to come to at the last. The lives of half the saints on record were spent in the successful solution of this problem: missionaries among the heathen, bishops in sees wasted with simony, priests in parishes lost in ignorant superstitions, abbots in dissolute monasteries. And it may be that this is the very problem which is to be somehow or other solved in our own days among us descendants of those very Saxons whom the zeal of Corman failed to convert, but whom the gentle rigours of St. Aidan built up as living stones into a very great and glorious Church. The tender but pure system of discipline introduced into Italy by St. Alfonso toward the conclusion of the last century,[1] though it met with clamour and opposition from the rigid party, has probably been one main cause of the singular revival of spirituality in that part of the Church.

On the return of Corman a synod was held in which he stated the impossibility of converting the Saxons. This was a serious matter to the synod, who were extremely desirous to grant Oswald's request, and to spread the light of the truth among their neighbours. Among the members of the council was the monk Aidan, who addressed Corman in these words: "My brother, it seems to me that you were harsher than is right with untaught hearers, and did not according to apostolic discipline hold forth first the milk of gentler doc-

[1] His Theologia Moralis was first published in 1753.

trine, until nourished by degrees with the Word of God they should be capable of imbibing more perfect precepts and attaining loftier practice." No sooner had he said this than the council cried out that Aidan ought to be made a bishop and sent to teach the unbelievers, in that God had filled him specially with the grace of discretion, which is the mother of the virtues. And so Oswald was provided with another St. Paulinus in the person of St. Aidan, whose successors included York within their see for thirty years, while that famous city remained without its pall for 135 years after Paulinus had gone to Rochester.

St. Aidan appears to have been left to fix his see where he pleased; and he chose the island of Lindisfarne, which was at no great distance from Bamborough, Oswald's royal city. The eight years of Oswald's reign were almost entirely taken up with the holy and happy duty of assisting his bishops. Churches were built in many places; public schools established; monasteries founded, and among them the famous Abbey of Hexham, and the regular monastic discipline of the Scots introduced into them. Daily, says the venerable Bede, did holy Scotchmen pass the borders preaching the Gospel all over Northumbria, and baptizing their converts. Very beautiful it was to see the humility of the good king. St. Aidan not being able to speak with fluency in English, Oswald interpreted his sermons to his generals and ministers, having learned the Scotch language thoroughly during his years of exile. Indeed Oswald seems to have taken no delight in the splendours of royalty; but, foregoing the state in

which St. Edwin lived, he appears before us more like a bishop than a king in all but the peculiar functions of that sacred office. Even when his earthly kingdom was larger than that of his predecessors, he was humble and attentive to pilgrims and the poor, and a great almsgiver. His conquests do not appear to have cost him long or bloody wars, or to have been acquired by worldly subtilty, but rather to have fallen upon him by way of natural consequence, as an adding of all other things to one who so eminently followed first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. That he was not a person of what historians call weak piety and womanish superstitions is plain from his effecting that great work which even St. Edwin had failed to bring about, and which is specially referred to St. Oswald, namely, the moulding the two adverse bodies of his population, the Deiri and the Bernicians, into one united, happy, and peaceful people.

Although St. Aidan had fixed his see at Lindisfarne, and Oswald his capital at Bamborough, the king was not unmindful of the city of York. He completed the Church of St. Peter there, which St. Edwin had begun to build over the wooden oratory of Paulinus, but had left unfinished at his death. Still though Oswald did not neglect his southern people the Deiri, yet his chief labours seem to have been among the Bernicians. There was good reason for this.[1] From the labours of St. Paulinus the southern province was in some measure supplied with churches, schools, oratories, and crosses,

[1] Alford sub anno 635.

whereas the Bernicians were almost wholly destitute of them. Cadwalla's army of occupation seems also to have been mainly fixed in Bernicia, and thus the vestiges of Christianity had been much more completely effaced there than among the Deiri.

Soon after his accession Oswald went to the court of the West Saxons to demand of Kinegils his daughter Kyneburga in marriage. This princess is not to be confounded with the saint of that name, the daughter of King Penda of Mercia, and the foundress of Caistor nunnery on the river Nen. It so happened that when Oswald was at the West Saxon court the most holy Bishop Birinus came to preach the Gospel to Kinegils; and that monarch becoming a convert to the faith, Oswald was his sponsor at the font, the spiritual father of the man whose son-in-law he soon afterwards became, and thus the name of our saint is connected with the foundation of the See of Dorchester. But these events belong to the life of St. Birinus.

The reign, therefore, of King Oswald was by no means an unimportant one in an historical or political point of view. He was, as men speak, a successful conqueror, a skilful statesman, and an enlightened improver of his dominions. Yet it is true that his life to our eyes resembles more the life of an ecclesiastic than of a king: *to our eyes*, for with us the world and its concerns have encroached so fearfully upon the business of our lives that to set apart anything like a fair portion of time to devotional exercises or the mortifications of penance is considered proper only for ecclesiastics; and thus have men come to the error of

confounding the clergy with the Church, until, perceiving the consequences of such a mistake, they charge the ambition of priests with inventing and fostering what was but the stupid and perverse misconception of the slothful laity. Few things are more striking in the lives of the saints than the wonderful manner in which kings and pontiffs were enabled to sanctify themselves beneath the pressure of secular business. We are told of St. Antonius of Florence, a most energetic and sedulous bishop, that over and above the Church offices, he contrived to recite daily the office of our Lady and the seven penitential psalms, together with the office for the dead twice a week, and on every feast-day the whole psalter. And yet this was the man who, from an abiding sense of his being the accountable person at the last day, would scarcely permit his vicar to relieve him of the smallest of his episcopal duties in that large and busy see. There is scarcely any limit to what an earnest will may do; and surely there is a grave lesson to us in all this. For how do we moderns mostly fritter our time away, making a business of things childishly unimportant, and calling upon the exercises of a devotional life to give way at almost every turn to imaginary duties, which suit our restless tempers better than the solitude and silence and secret contemplation wherein the life of the soul consists!

King Oswald was not idle when he was interpreting the Scotch sermons of St. Aidan. But much of his time was spent in occupations which had even less reference to this world than that edifying work of humility and love. He was, as

all saints have been, a lover of heavenly contemplation; and he was wont to tell his bishops that it had pleased God at many times so to purge his bodily vision that he had clearly beheld the splendour of the angels and spirits, whose offices and orders were likely to be favourite subjects of meditation to a mind constituted as his was. Feeling how intimately allied the grace of chastity was with this blissful communion with the world of spirit, he prevailed upon his queen to consent to their living a life of continence, that so they might more resemble those happy spirits who neither marry nor are given in marriage, and might the rather become to them an object of special love, ministry and protection.

His hours of devotion were stolen from sleep rather than from the toils of government. He rose at midnight for the nocturns and lauds, and when the office was over he remained in prayer till it was day. Such a habit of recollection and prayer did the holy king attain that in all times and places he was praying; and whenever he sat down it came natural to him to turn up his hands upon his knees in act of prayer: an attitude which is not unfrequently to be seen in old illuminations. It became, St. Bede tells us, a popular proverb that King Oswald died in prayer; for when he was surrounded by the weapons of his enemies he cried, as he fell to the ground, "Lord! have mercy on their souls!" a petition which might perhaps have a double reference, as well to those of his own soldiers who perished as to his enemies who slew him.

As it was thus vouchsafed him at the close of his life to copy the example of our blessed Lord, so on another occasion was it permitted him to act over again the part of holy David, and yet therein to copy our Lord also. During his reign there broke out a dreadful pestilence among his people, so that nothing was to be seen all round but funerals, nothing heard but the lamentations of the affrighted survivors. This mournful spectacle weighed heavy on the spirit of King Oswald; and though it does not appear that the plague was lying on the people because of the monarch's sins, yet he humbly entreated God to take himself and his family as victims of the cruel disease, and to spare his people. Of course none but a very holy person could venture without profaneness on such a prayer as this: and, like St. Paul's supplication for Israel, it was perhaps offered up under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. To pray for the high and awful privileges of suffering is something more than to covet them. Love will prompt even those whose obedience is but scant and sorry measure to covet earnestly for poverty, contempt, obscurity, loneliness and pain, who yet would feel that it was unbecoming for men of their poor attainments to pray directly for such things, lest the petition should spring from a momentary heat, not from a bold and steadfast tranquillity, and then it would be so very dreadful were God to answer it, and we to fail beneath the trial.

But what is so bold as simplicity and a single heart? It was in this temper that Oswald offered up his venturous prayer; and most graciously,

because most literally, was it answered. He was seized by the plague with unusual violence; it would seem from the narrative as though there was something unusual in the severity of the attack. Yet who so joyful as the suffering king? It was so directly a visitation of God, as to be a great consolation to one who thirsted after that blessed Presence as the hart desireth the water-brooks. And there he lay upon his cross, an acceptable expiation, through the meritorious intercession of his Lord, for the sins of his people. While he thus lay expecting death, offering his life for the life of others, he beheld in an ecstasy three figures of unearthly form and stature, who came to his bedside, and spoke comfortable words to him. At length one of them said, "Thy prayers and meekness, O king, are accepted with God; thou belongest to us, for as a reward of thy faith, charity, and piety thou shall shortly be crowned with an immortal crown. But not at present: God giveth thee now both thy life and thy subjects' lives: thou art ready to die a martyr for them; but thou shalt soon die far more happily as a martyr for God." After this the vision disappeared, leaving the king full of inward joy and consolation. His bodily health was now restored; the infection went no further, for the plague was stayed in the person of the saint, and the angel of wrath appeased by his self-sacrifice.[1]

[1] This story is given on the authority of Capgrave, not of Bede: not that there seems any reason for doubting its truth; yet as the rest of St. Oswald's life (except what is said of his frequently seeing angels) is supported by the unimpeachable testimony of Bede, it seemed better to mark what was not.

The same heroic simplicity characterised his giving of alms. Indeed there seems hardly any virtue which calls more for the readiness and single-mindedness of faith than alms-giving. There are so many apparent reasons against it: the brevity and absoluteness of the evangelical rule so little squares with the circumstances of society in *any* age: it seems to be so constantly on the point of sacrificing discretion to impulse, that really a person to be a cheerful and hearty alms-giver must have advanced some way towards that childlike temper which is the perfection of our regenerate nature. People forget that He who gives His sunshine and His rain to the evil and good is set before us as our pattern in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. The generosity of the world—and it has its ages of generosity—invents for itself a cumbrous and slowly moving system, a huge and complicated apparatus for dispensing alms; but all which it attains is the neglect of some deserving objects through fear of blessing any undeserving, an end not worth attaining, if it were right, but which, if we are to copy God, is absolutely wrong. At best heartiness evaporates in the long and secular process, and secrecy which is the life of evangelical alms is rendered most difficult, and self-forgetfulness in the matter well-nigh impossible; yet surely even self-forgetfulness, which is something more than secrecy, is plainly intimated in our Saviour's words.

A popular book descants with almost contemptuous pity on the mistaken philanthropy of St. Charles Borromeo. To such minds the following anecdote of St. Oswald will seem to record

nothing beyond an unwise impulse countenanced by a superstitious bishop. However, it will be both soothing and edifying to those who have felt how hard it is to restrain those impulses to feed the hungry and to clothe the naked, when the occasions present themselves, or, say rather, are providentially brought to us, on days when the Church is in joy and at feast for some great thing wrought for her by her Lord. It was on Easter Day that King Oswald sat at dinner with a fitting Easter guest, the holy Bishop Aidan. Before him stood a silver dish full of kingly dainties, and they were on the point of lifting up their hands to bless the bread, when suddenly a servitor appeared who filled a characteristic office in the royal household —to look out for and relieve the poor. He knew his master too well to fear it would be any disturbance to him at his feast to tell him that the streets about the palace were thronged with poor asking an alms of the king. Oswald's eyes fell on the silver dish and the royal dainties, and without a moment's hesitation he ordered the dainties to be divided among the poor, and the sumptuous dish to be cut in pieces and distributed amongst them. Probably as he spoke he raised his right hand to make some gesture to the servant, possibly pointing to the lordly dish. St. Aidan was at his side: delighted with the pious act he seized his master's hand, and said, "May this hand never perish!" and the bishop's benediction was fulfilled, for the hand and arm, severed from his body in the battle, remained uncorrupted down to St. Bede's time, and received the veneration of the faithful in St.

Peter's church at Bamborough. No doubt the common fare which was left for the king was better seasoned than the dainties he had given to the poor : and a merry heart was Oswald's Easter feast that year.

These are but grapes from Eshcol, samples of what the good King Oswald did and said during the eight years of his earthly reign : enough is left on record for the love and homage of the faithful, the rest is known to God ; some going before the martyr to judgment, and some following after ; for if sinners bequeath their sins in legacy to their descendants, much more do the mighty relics of the saints continue to edify and bless the Church.

The reign of this holy king closed in the year 642. Penda, the pagan tyrant who had slain St. Edwin, invaded the dominions of St. Oswald. A battle was fought at Maserfeld on the 5th of August, Oswald being thirty-eight years of age. The hour predicted by the three heavenly personages was now come, when he was to be offered up a martyr to God. Many persons find a difficulty in the use of the word *martyr*, as sanctioned by the Church. They would have it restricted to such as made a theological confession of the faith before the tribunal of heathen magistrates, and suffered unto death for such confession. Yet surely this is a narrow view to take of the matter. Whosoever witnesses to Christ by his death is in some sense a martyr, and as such witness may take almost innumerable shapes and be capable of manifold degrees, so in a fuller or remoter sense, from the quiet death-bed of a saint to the shows of the

amphitheatre, may the word martyrdom be applied to the dying confession of a Christian. There can be little doubt that Penda's hatred of Oswald arose in no slight measure from his being a Christian; and the interests of the Church seemed humanly speaking to be involved in the success of Oswald.

However, Oswald was slain upon the field. His forces were far inferior to the pagan army, and it pleased God to take him to Himself. When the weapons of his enemies were bristling above his head, and he was overshadowed with them as by a grove of trees, he prayed the prayer before alluded to, and breathed his last beneath a multitude of wounds. There seems in the reverence paid to him in after-ages something of affection mingled as for a young person; and his youth is dwelt upon as if it were a resting-point for love. So when he is said to have appeared to Earnan the monk of Lindisfarne together with St. Cuthbert in Durham Abbey, he was clothed in a red robe, his face was long, his stature tall, his beard scarcely visible from his youth, and altogether a most beautiful young man; and the monk seems to bring out his youth in contrast with the venerable and awe-inspiring visage of the mighty Cuthbert.

There is a controversy respecting Maserfeld, the scene of Oswald's martyrdom. Camden, Capgrave, Raine and others place it at Oswestry in Shropshire, and the name certainly goes some way toward a proof of their opinion. Alban Butler, Powel, and Cowper place it at Winwick in Lancashire, and for

their view there is an inscription on the outside of the south wall of the parish church; and certainly Winwick was in aftertimes distinguished by a special devotion for St. Oswald.

No sooner was Oswald dead than the brutal Penda caused his head and arms to be severed from his body and stuck on poles. They appear to have remained on the battlefield till the following year, when Oswy removed them, and sent the head to Lindisfarne. But the lives of saints in many cases do not end with their deaths: their influence over the visible Church is often more signally exerted through their relics than it was in their sojourn upon earth. Somewhat of that power which they now have in their glorified state is permitted to be transfused into their mortal remains, and through them to act upon the Church. Many of the saints have lived and died almost in obscurity, whose relics have worked wonders for centuries; God who saw them in secret while on earth thus manifesting them openly after He has taken them from us.

The rest of St. Oswald's relics were afterwards translated by Queen Ofthrida, the daughter of Oswy, and niece of the saint, to her favourite monastery of Bardney in Lincolnshire. The car freighted with this precious burden arrived at the gates of the monastery when it was growing dusk. The monks, though they acknowledged his sanctity, refused to admit the relics on the ground of his having reigned over them as a foreigner. This was an unexpected obstacle. Meanwhile a large tent was pitched over the car to protect the sacred remains from the dew,

and to show at least some reverence towards them. As the night became dark a long luminous pillar stood over the car, and seemed to reach to heaven. It was seen far and wide, so that well-nigh all the inhabitants of Lincolnshire were witnesses of this miraculous attestation of King Oswald's sanctity. It is not impossible that the refusal of the monks of Bardney to admit the relics on the previous evening had some connection with St. Oswald's adoption of the Scotch usages. His being a foreigner in an ecclesiastical sense would sink deeper in the minds of holy brethren given up, like the angels, to perpetual liturgy and divine ceremonial, than his merely being a temporal ruler usurping the throne of St. Edwin's children. However this may be, the miraculous splendour which rested during the night above the relics seemed clearly a heavenly token, to which they joyfully submitted, and prayed with much earnestness to be allowed now to receive into their monastery the remains of one so dear to God. The bones were carefully washed, and deposited in a shrine within the Church, above which was hung a banner of purple and of gold. The water in which the relics had been washed was poured out reverently in a corner of the consecrated enclosure, and the earth which it had moistened was gifted with the power of casting out devils.

Even the ground where it fell received into it a power of miracle. Men scraped up the dust, and putting it into water administered it to their sick, and they were healed: it being no wonder, as Bede beautifully remarks, that it should work this kind of miracles, inasmuch as when alive the Saint had

been so distinguished for his care of the poor and ailing. We are told, on the same authority, that not very long after his death, and the removal of his relics, a traveller was journeying near the place where he fell. His horse, through fatigue or some other cause, was seized with a violent fit, and rolled on the ground, foaming. The rider expected every moment to see the beast die, when, to his astonishment, it happened to roll upon the very spot where Oswald fell, and immediately the fit ceased, and after turning quietly from side to side the horse rose and began to eat the grass. The traveller did not know he was on the spot where the king was slain; but there was something so evidently miraculous in the cure that he felt convinced there was some special sanctity in the place, and carefully set a mark upon it that he might know it again. Such was the turn of men's minds in ages when the invisible world was so much more vividly realised than it is now, when the blinding veils of science, falsely so called, intervene to rescue men from the irksome contemplation of the awful realities of the unseen world. At the inn where the traveller halted for the evening, the landlord's niece lay sick of the palsy, and, while the people in the house were deploring her illness, he recounted what had happened to his horse. Faith was not wanting in the people: the patient was taken in a cart, and laid down on the spot where Oswald died, there fell asleep, and awoke cured of her infirmity, returning on foot to the house.

Another traveller, of whom Bede speaks, was passing by the battle-field, when he observed a

place round which the herbage was unusually green. He, arguing as the other had done, concluded that the soldier slain there, whoever he was, was the holiest man of the host: whereupon he put a quantity of the earth into a linen cloth, intending to use it for the cure of sick people. At night he came to a village, and was invited into a house where the master was feasting his neighbours, and he hung the cloth containing the earth upon a post in the wall. The house was thatched and the walls merely wattled, and a huge fire burned in the centre. From the carelessness of conviviality the fire seems to have been neglected, and some sparks communicating with the thatch, a conflagration ensued. The house was entirely burned down, except the post on which the earth was hung, and that remained miraculously untouched by the flames. In consequence of these two miracles pilgrims began to frequent the place where St. Oswald fell, either for the cure of their own infirmities, or to fetch earth for the healing of their relatives.

When Queen Ofthrida, who removed St. Oswald's relics to Bardney, was once upon a visit at that monastery, there came to stay with her an abbess, the venerable Ethelhilda. In conversation the abbess mentioned how she had seen the luminous column which stood over the body of Oswald, when it was excluded from the monastery: the queen in turn related how even the dust of the pavement, whereon the water in which his bones had been washed was poured, had healed many sick people. Ethelhilda before her departure from

Bardney requested that some of the dust might be given her. This she deposited as a rich treasure in a casket, and went her way. Soon after, there came to her monastery a guest who was possessed with a devil; and the night of his arrival the evil spirit took him so that he foamed at the mouth, and gnashed his teeth, and all his limbs were distorted. No one being able to hold him, alarm was given to the abbess, who, going with one of the nuns to the door of the man's apartment, called for a priest to go with her to her guest. The exorcisms of the priest proved unavailing. At last the abbess bethought her of the sacred dust. No sooner was it brought into the porch of the room where the sufferer was than the convulsions ceased. The man sat up, and sighing deeply, like one wearied, said, "Now am I sound, and have received the senses of my mind." Whereupon he was asked how he had come to himself, and he answered, "Presently when that virgin came with the casket to the threshold the spirits who vexed me disappeared." The abbess gave him a little of the holy dust, and he was never troubled by his enemy again.

In the monastery of Bardney, before mentioned, there was a little boy who had been long tormented by the ague. One day, when he was mournfully anticipating the periodical return of his fit, a monk said to him, "Child! shall I tell you how to get rid of this infirmity? Rise, go into the church, and sit by Oswald's tomb, stay there quietly, and do not leave the place. Do not stir till the hour of the return of the fever is past; then I will come in and fetch you away." The boy did so; the

disease did not fall on him while he sat by the Saint's grave, and after persevering in this devotion two or three days, the ague left him altogether.

But it was not only in England that many wonders were wrought by his relics. In Ireland also, and in Germany, were miracles performed through the intercession of St. Oswald. Wilbrord was wont to speak of what prodigies had been performed among the Frisons, and it formed part of that holy man's conversation with Wilfrid while the latter stayed with him. And one miracle specially Wilbrord related, as having happened in Ireland when he was a priest. A great pestilence broke out, and among its victims was a certain scholar, addicted to worldly literature, but hitherto not concerned about his soul. As his death drew near, the scholar's mind became overshadowed by the fear of hell. In his terror he sent for Wilbrord, who was in the neighbourhood, and with a broken voice complained to him: "My disease increases, and I am now about to die; and I doubt not that after the death of my body, my soul will be carried away into the torments of hell, for although I have studied divinity, yet have I been engaged in vice rather than in keeping the Divine laws. But I am resolved, if God's mercy should spare me, to correct my evil habits, and submit my whole life to the Divine Will. Yet I know I do not deserve to have my life prolonged, neither can I expect it except through the aid of those who have faithfully served God. We have heard, for it is everywhere spoken of, that there has been in your country a wonder-

fully holy king, called Oswald, the excellency of whose faith and holiness has even after death been attested by many miracles. I pray you, if you have any of his relics, bring them to me; peradventure the Lord will please for his merits to have pity upon me." Wilbrord answered that he had some of the stake on which his head was impaled; and asked him if he had faith in God's goodness and the holiness of St. Oswald. The sufferer replied that he had: whereupon Wilbrord blessed some water and put a chip of the holy oak into it, and the sick man drank, and was healed. Through Divine grace he kept his vow, and became an eminent servant of God.

Thus did it please God to glorify His servant St. Oswald. Of his blessed relics nothing more need now be said, except that when the monks fled from Lindisfarne it seems that St. Oswald's head was put into the same coffin with the body of the mighty Cuthbert, and with it performed the same long and mysterious pilgrimage from east to west, and back again to the east, until it reposed in the lordly Abbey of Durham. "Deus, qui glorificatur in consilio sanctorum, magnus et terribilis super omnes qui in circuitu ejus."

It would seem that public and authorised reverence was soon paid to the relics of St. Oswald, and we know that they were carried about during the Danish invasion, in such way as to show that they were very much set by. But there is a miracle, or as the modern Italians would more correctly say, a *grazia*, recorded in the fourth book of St. Bede's history, which seems to be connected with the

first public celebration of St. Oswald's day. The monastery of Selsey, founded by St. Wilfrid, was ravaged in 681 by a fierce pestilence while Eappa was abbot. The monks, in order to deprecate the Divine Wrath, set apart three days for solemn fasting and prayer. At this time there was in the monastery a little Saxon boy, recently converted, and who was confined to his bed by the plague. He was a boy of unusually gentle disposition and mild demeanour, and a deep reverence for the faith he had lately learned; and altogether one whose simplicity would render him a likely person to be favoured with a heavenly vision. While he was lying alone in the infirmary about seven in the morning of the second fast-day, there appeared to him in vision two wonderful personages, who saluted him very lovingly, and said, "You are uneasy about death, young child; but do not fear it, for we are come to carry you to-day to the heavenly kingdom. However, you must first wait till the masses are said, and you must receive the viaticum of the Lord's Body and Blood, and so freed at once from infirmity and death, you shall be carried up to the eternal joys of heaven. Now, then, call the priest Eappa, and tell him that the Lord has heard your prayers, and turned a gracious eye on your devotion and fasting: no one, therefore, of this monastery, or its neighbouring possessions, shall henceforth die of this plague. All who are at present labouring under it, among your people, shall recover from their sickness, except yourself, and you shall this day be freed by death, and taken to the vision of our Lord Christ, whom you have

faithfully served. The Divine mercy has granted this through the intercession of the religious King Oswald, dear to God, who formerly reigned over the Northumbrians with the authority both of temporal power and Christian sanctity, which leads to an eternal kingdom. For it was on this same day that that king was slain in battle by the infidels, and was presently assumed to the eternal joys of souls, and enrolled among the armies of the elect. Let them consult their books, which contain the obituaries, and they will find that he was on this day taken out of the world. Let them then say mass in all the oratories of this monastery, as well in thanksgiving for their prayers being heard, as in commemoration of King Oswald, who once governed their nation. On this account it was that he suppliantly offered up his prayers for them as for strangers of his people, and let all the brethren be convened in church, and let them all communicate in the Heavenly Sacrifice, and give over fasting, and refresh their bodies with food."

These words the little Saxon boy duly related to Eappa, who made particular inquiries as to the dress and appearance of the persons who had appeared to him. The boy told him that they were noble and beautiful beyond what he could have conceived, and that the one was bearded, but the other shorn like a clerk, and that one was called Peter and the other Paul, and that Jesus had sent them to protect the monastery. Eappa, referring to the chronicles, found that it was really the anniversary of St. Oswald's death. The masses

were said, all communicated, the little boy received the viaticum, and the fast was broken; and before sunset the boy died, and the plague ceased, and ever after St. Oswald's day was observed, and a very solemn mass celebrated thereon.

THE LIFE OF

S T. O S W I N

KING AND MARTYR, A.D. 651

It is impossible to write of that fair portion of our native land, which was the kingdom of St. Edwin, St. Oswald, and St. Oswin, without reflecting upon its present state and the changes it has undergone. It is no longer the land of greenwood, blythe forester and open-hearted baron and wandering ballad-monger: but the world must change, if for no other reason at least for this, that it may sicken its children of putting confidence in it, and too much work lies before us of the nineteenth century to allow us to stand still to be merely poetical in our regrets. So let the baron go, and the ballad-monger, though there might be much about them which was the type of a healthier and heartier state of things. But Northumberland is no longer the land of royal monasteries, of sacred shrines, of ennobling traditions, of active Catholicism, or an effective Church. It is a region of ecclesiastical ruins, of upbraiding memorials of the past, with materials which Churchmen in their present position have no room to act upon, however zealous and self-denying they may

be. Using the word Northumberland in its old sense, not for the modern county only, the face of the land is literally darkened, the sun obscured, the verdure tinged, the waters dyed, by the consequences of that mineral wealth for which it is now so famous the whole world over. And more than this—what concerns us more nearly is that there are cumbrous clouds of population, almost homeless, swaying here and there as the changes and the swervings of trade and employment propel them; a sight sufficient to paralyse the parish priest, a monster which the mere parochial system cannot dream of coping with; and contemporaneously with this new startling phenomenon, so well has Satan contrived his schemes that the ecclesiastical wealth of the palatinate is drained off from its proper localities just when it was most wanted. How easy does it seem for our holy mother the Church to pour forth an itinerant army of rough and eloquent friars into this mass of sin, wretchedness and disorder, and by God's help to make it instinct with Catholic life and purity, how sure the results, how infinitely blessed! Yet are we so tied and bound by our sins, by a poor feeble unhealthful system which is the consequence of sin, that we must needs sit still and with drooping hearts confide to money and to stone chapels and material school-houses the mission given at the first, and for ever, to flesh and blood, to living apostolic teachers. But let us be content: mayhap we have not vital heat and active nerve enough within us to throw out such a power of ardent life as would be necessary to compass these huge masses of people;

for the present let it suffice us to be working that way, and seek for consolation from those wells of hope for the future, the actual deeds and sufferings of a better past: and with this thought let us go to the scanty notices which we have left of Oswin, the humble and the affable, who ruled the kingdom of Northumberland in the seventh age. And as to the trammels of our ailing system, think what thousands of monks are chanting every tierce, "Memor fui judiciorum tuorum a sæculo, Domine; et consolatus sum."

When the monk of Tynemouth was asked by his brethren to write the life and martyrdom of St. Oswin,[1] he found in the reign of King Stephen a copiousness and a scarcity of materials. It was hard to say which of the two embarrassed him most; for on the one hand Bede had said very little, and what Bede had not said was very likely apocryphal, and on the other there was a great desire to write a life, an edifying life, of a saint so highly venerated among the northern Catholics. However, he resolved to follow Bede, and to dilate only upon those many miracles which had been wrought through the intercession or by the relics of St. Oswin. We must be content, therefore, to take St. Oswin as one of the cases not uncommon in hagiology, where what is actually known of the saint is quite disproportioned to the extent and degree of veneration paid to him by Christians. This may be partly owing to the copiousness of posthumous miracles, as with the

[1] Published by the Surtees Society from the MS. Cotton, Julius, A. X.

nameless remains of martyrs in the catacombs to which some arbitrary title, as of a Christian virtue, has been given ; and partly to the fact that where an immediate and widely spread popular devotion to a saint arose, men did not at first think of recording what everybody about them knew without reading.

Oswin was the son of Osric, king of the Deiri, the monarch who unhappily apostatised from the faith, and was afterwards slain by the bloody Cadwalla of Cumberland. At the time of his father's death Oswin appears to have been quite a child, so that, being beneath the notice of the vindictive conqueror, his friends managed to carry him off among the West Saxons. It would seem that he was baptized while young, either before his father was slain, or when he was first taken among the Christian subjects of Kinegils. He lived in exile for ten long years, greatly edifying those among whom he dwelt. He was very beautiful, tall of stature, and of a particularly engaging address ; but these things, which to most young men are calamities, as being so many occasions of falling, he turned to the glory of God. Among other virtues he was so conspicuous for the grace of chastity that his biographer compares him to Joseph while dwelling among the Egyptians. Among posterity generally his more especial grace was thought to be humility ; and indeed it is very observable how intimately connected a lowly mind seems to be with pure thoughts, so that one virtue appears to follow as a consequence upon the other. For bashfulness which is the shield of purity is close upon humility.

Like so many other of the Saxon kings, Oswin learned the art of reigning in the school of exile. After the death of St. Oswald Oswy became king of the Bernicians; Oswin returned from exile, and either by Oswy's adoption, as some say, or by the election of the nobles, according to others, was raised to the throne of the Deiri. When we come within the sphere of the Church, how the jarring sounds of earthly strife seem all stilled! Saint reigns after saint among the Northumbrians, yet the reign of one is the exile of the other; the term of power with the one is exactly the term of depression with the other. Yet the exile is God's school; there the saint was made, and Oswald seems as it were the stern author of the sanctity of Oswin. So it was with Oswald himself: the death of the blessed Edwin opens the gates of his native land to the fugitive prince, the future king and saint. Thus is evil temporary: thus even in time is the Church anticipating the eternal order of things, weeding out evil from the creation of God, gathering it into bundles, and burning it. Thus while history is a continuous record of splendid sins, the lives of the saints have also their continuity; to the world's eye much is left out of what forms the history of a nation, but holy legends teach us to see the course of things more as angels see it, laying bare the footprints of the Most High, and revealing the under-current of history, slow and tranquil and imperturbed as the peace which is around the Throne invisible. The secular details of Oswin's reign are not preserved to us; doubtless they were full of that consistency and sagacity

which high principle invariably displays. The general results, however, are told us; they were peace, order, and the happiness of those beneath his sway. We may be sure also that ecclesiastical matters prospered under his care; for there existed the closest friendship between the sovereign and the holy Bishop Aidan. Oswin's biographer, the monk of Tynemouth, beautifully exclaims, "O man full of piety! O worthy of a crown! In that time the most blessed Bishop Aidan ruled with his pastoral care the province of the Northumbrians. He was a Scot by birth, Catholic in his faith. St. Oswald the king had raised him to the episcopate, and by his preaching Divine grace had converted no small number of the people to the faith of Christ. It was this holy man's custom to teach the people committed to his charge, not in the Church only, but seeing how tender the young faith yet was, he went about the province entering the houses of the believers, and sowing the seed of the divine word in the field of their hearts, as each one was able to receive it. This man, so careful of the flock entrusted to him, used often to come to St. Oswin, king of the Deiri, and stay with him on account of the sweet odour of his sanctity. He admonished him to persevere in good works, and always to be advancing to better things, and the summits of perfection, and, taught by the Holy Spirit, he forewarned him how that he must pass to the heavenly kingdom through martyrdom. The king, receiving him as a saint, gave diligent heed to his preaching the words of life; and holding himself in devout subjection to that most beloved father, he corrected

at his reproof whatsoever he had done amiss. The bishop indeed was beyond measure delighted with the humility and obedience of the king, and often held familiar converse with him about the contempt of the world, the sweetness of a heavenly life, and the glory of the saints. The king was by no means a forgetful hearer of the Word of God, but a zealous doer of the same ; and, according as he had learned from his good master, he took care of all with a fatherlike affection, benignantly relieving the poor and especially strangers, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and bestowing favours with alacrity upon all who asked them. There was between them such a confederacy of mutual love, that the king held the holy bishop for an angel, and obeyed his suggestions as though they were inspired. The bishop on the other hand loved the king as though he were part of his own soul, one while upbraiding him as a son if he were too much occupied, as men are wont to be, in secular matters, another while cherishing and inflaming him like a dear friend with spiritual conversation."[1]

A most beautiful example of this intercourse between the bishop and the king has been left on record for our edification. We have already alluded to St. Aidan's custom of making circuits through his diocese and entering houses and catechising. These pastoral journeys he mostly performed on foot, after the example of our blessed Lord, of whom we read only once that He rode upon an ass, entering His own city in such meek triumphal guise that the

[1] Vita S. Oswini, c. i. sub fin.

prophet's words might be fulfilled. Personal fatigue and hardship and what the world would call loss of time were not the only disadvantages which the holy prelate sustained. The frequent rivers and streams of the northern shires of England, for the most part rapid and stony, were to be forded often at the risk of life. To save the bishop from this peril, as well as to lighten his labours, Oswin made him a present of a very valuable horse, which St. Aidan accepted. Possibly the bishop put less value upon it than the king, for riding would not be so favourable as walking to the constant self-recollection and mental prayer which he doubtless practised on his journeys, making the intervals of passage from place to place in some measure to compensate the loss of that former monastic leisure which he had cheerfully given up for the edification of his neighbour. However this may be, Oswin's horse did not stay long with St. Aidan. For soon after the present had been made, the bishop mounted on his horse, adorned with rich and royal trappings, met a beggar who asked him for an alms. The saint with the utmost alacrity dismounted from his steed, and presented it with all its furniture to the poor man. Either that day or shortly afterwards St. Aidan was to dine with the king ; before dinner some one told Oswin of what was perhaps considered the slight put by the bishop on the royal beneficence. As they were going to the banquet Oswin said, " My Lord Bishop ! why did you give to a poor man that royal horse which it was more fitting to keep for your own use ? Have we not plenty of horses of less price and of commoner

sorts which would have been good enough for gifts to the poor without your giving them that one which I had particularly selected for your own possession ?" Whether the king spoke as if nettled by the apparent slight, or complainingly as if hurt by the want of attachment shown in parting so lightly with a friend's gift, we are not told ; but the bishop was ready with his answer, "What is that you say, O king ? Is that foal of a mare dearer to you than that son of God ?" meaning the beggar. It would seem from the narrative that Oswin was somewhat out of temper, and was brooding over the matter in his mind. For when they entered the banquet-room the bishop went and sat down in his accustomed place, while the king, who had just returned from hunting, stood and warmed himself at the fire. Perhaps there was something of an inward struggle going on. If so, it soon was over ; for as he stood by the fire, he pondered the bishop's words, and suddenly ungirding his sword and giving it to a servant, he fell down at St. Aidan's feet and besought his forgiveness. "Never again," said the humbled king, "will I say any more of this, or take upon myself to judge what or how much of my treasure you bestow upon the sons of God." The bishop was much moved, and starting up he raised his sovereign, declaring that he was entirely reconciled to him, and begging that he would be seated and enjoy the banquet. Oswin did as the bishop said, and with the elasticity of spirits which ever follows close upon humbling ourselves to confess what we have done wrong, the king grew merry at the feast. But the countenance

of the bishop saddened, and the more light-hearted the good king became, so much the more was St. Aidan lost in silence and sorrow, and kept shedding tears. It chanced that a priest sat near, a Scot, who asked his bishop in the Scottish tongue, which the king did not understand, why he wept. "I know well," said Aidan, "that the king will not live long; for never have I seen before a prince so humble; wherefore I feel assured that he will soon be taken our of this life, for this nation is not worthy to have such a sovereign." This, whether it were prophecy, or that foreboding which men seem naturally to have when they look on great goodness, was too truly fulfilled.

Such was the intercourse between bishop and king, when both were saints; and the monk of Tynemouth beautifully comments on it. "Truly the strict demand of equity is that the inferior should be willingly subject to the power of the superior. Nevertheless, growth in righteousness brings it about that an equal sometimes submits to an equal; but that the superior should humble himself before the inferior comes only from the perfection of consummate righteousness. Wherefore the Great Creator humbling Himself to the baptism of His inferior creature, when the other shrunk, said, Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness, as though He meant by the superior humbling himself to the inferior. This perfection of righteousness in the blessed King Oswin, taught not by literary profession but by the unction of the Holy Paraclete, when forgetful of his regal majesty he lay at his

bishop's feet, not only called out the wondering admiration of the wild people which he governed, but even kindled in religious fathers by his example a love of humiliation. But the bishops of those days were not, as now,[1] pre-eminent in the insolent affluence of wealth, or the pompous luxury of precious vestments, even beyond secular folk, but poor in spirit, poor in means, and so easily open to contempt; and on that very account it was all the more laudable to pay reverence unto them."[2]

Oswin's biographer goes on to say that there were on record many other examples of his great humility, but that he will not relate them lest he should dwell too much on one of his virtues to the depreciation of the rest. One may regret that the good monk has robbed us through such an ill-founded apprehension. Next to humility mercifulness is counted as a special grace of Oswin's, mercifulness not only in the giving of alms, but in what often involves greater self-sacrifice and patience and alacrity—in succouring the oppressed. At the same time he exhibited firmness and even forwardness (acredo) in repressing those who were disobedient to his laws. Neither were the interior exercises of a spiritual life forgotten; he watched, he fasted, he prayed; and it was in those things and out of those things that he got his humility. Such were the virtues with which "that soul devoted to God was green as the spring, becomingly and abundantly."

It would appear as if Oswy almost from the very

[1] *i.e.* in the days of King Stephen.
[2] Vit. Osw. c. ii. sub fin.

first found it hard to brook the division of the kingdom, which the rule of St. Oswald had moulded into one. If then it were he who raised Oswin to the throne of the Deiri, he must have quickly repented of his own measure; or if the elevation of our saint were owing to the election of the nobles, it was probably distasteful to Oswy at the outset, but that circumstances controlled his opposition or made it necessary for him to dissemble. The very sanctity of Oswin, being in the mouths of all, Bernicians as well as Deiri, was gall to Oswy, and fostered his malignant envy. As the monk words it, Oswy tried the serpent, before he took to the lion. In other words, he endeavoured for long to compass the death of Oswin by subtlety. But the love and fidelity of all around him was a shield which the dagger of the assassin could never penetrate. Sometimes the schemes of Oswy were detected or anticipated by the shrewdness of his intended victim: at other times Oswin was warned of them by the very men who were compelled to act as the instruments of Oswy. Thus passed seven years of outward peace and outward glory for Oswin; but we learn from this that even the throne was as it were a school of affliction. The continual sense of insecurity, the harassing continuance of suspicion, the weary diligence of warding off blows, the restlessness of being on the watch, the wretched feeling of having *one* enemy, of being a hunted thing—such was the ermine which lined St. Oswin's crown; the very kind of life which God gave his servant David wherewithal to sanctify himself.

It is said that the reverence, which the character of St. Aidan compelled even from the dark-minded Oswy, was the main cause that for seven years outward peace was kept. Two years followed of still greater trial for Oswin. We are not told why; only it is recorded that these two years were more troubled than the foregoing ones: possibly the impatience of envy was unable to wear its disguise any longer, and broke out into more frequent displays of malignity. Besides which Oswy was enraged at being baffled by the sagacious gentleness of his enemy, and in half abhorrence of his own meanness took refuge in the more masculine wickedness of open rage. To borrow the monk's similitude of the animals, weary and ashamed of crawling he resolved to roar and to devour; and at last gathered together an army for Oswin's destruction.

Oswin likewise collected some forces, but so inconsiderable that it would appear as though he came rather to deprecate war than to make it. He met Oswy at Wilfar's Hill, about ten miles from Catterick, near the pleasant Swale, in whose clear waters St. Paulinus had baptized the Saxon peasantry of Yorkshire. Seeing the inferiority of his forces, and yet their desperate resolution to sell their lives for their king, and considering that it was personal affection to himself which animated them, Oswin paused. The bloody slaughter which must ensue overshadowed his gentle spirit, and he could not endure to be the cause of death to so many, whether of his own little chivalrous band,

or of his foes.[1] He therefore determined to withdraw from the field and disband his troops. If it was his crown which Oswy wanted, it was not much for him to resign it, and live in obscurity; but if it were his life as well as his crown, why then, if we live, we live unto the Lord, and if we die, we die unto the Lord, therefore he could part with that also. He called his little army together and spoke to some such effect as this; I say, *to some such effect*, for the monk's narrative seems a little more florid than the original legend probably was. "I thank you, my most faithful captains and strenuous soldiers, for your good-will towards me; but far be it from me that for my sake only such danger should be run by you who from a poor exile made me[2] into a king. I prefer, therefore, to return into exile, nay, even to die, than to hazard so many lives. Let me in peace, and not in war, embrace the divine sentence against myself, conveyed to me by the mouth of the blessed Bishop Aidan, that through martyrdom must I enter the joys of heaven. I refuse not to end my earthly life in such order and time as Christ shall will." The soldiers, seeing how earnestly their king coveted to depart and be with Christ, were wounded "with a deep wound in their hearts," and all with one accord went down on their knees before him, and wept, and prayed to fight

[1] Though Bede's narrative quite admits of this turn, yet it treats Oswin's flight rather as an act of prudence than of heroic virtue. Not so the monk of Tynemouth. Of course both may be, and most probably are, true together.

[2] The monk of Tynemouth, therefore, refers Oswin's exaltation to the election of the nobles, not to Oswy's voluntary choice.

for him. "Haply we may conquer; we may break even through yon wedges of men; but if not, let us die, and not pass into a proverb as deserters of our king." But Oswin was unmoved. He saw that it was himself and not his people who were aimed at, that Oswy would not ravage the country or oppress the people even for his own sake, and that by forbidding the battle he was not abandoning his subjects to the horrors of a cruel invasion. He explained this to his men, and concluded by saying, "I pant after martyrdom and the joys of the heavenly kingdom."

When he had said this, he prayed solemnly to God and said, "Father of mercy and God of all consolation, whose Son is the Angel of great counsels, whose Spirit is the Comforter in difficulties, grant me in this strait to choose the better way. For if I fight, I shall be guilty before Thee of the shedding of blood. If I fly, I shall be counted to have degenerated from the nobility of my parents, and to have fallen short of my station. Flying, I displease men: fighting, I am displeasing unto Thee." And so, says the monk, he fixed his anchor in God.

Oswin, disbanding his forces, chose one companion of his exile, a faithful adherent named Tondhere, the son of Tylsius. With him he passed that evening from Wilfar's Hill to the village of Gilling, on the west border of Yorkshire, which lies in a green and blithe valley of considerable depth, not far from Richmond. The estate, or to use a later word, the fief of Gilling, he had lately conferred upon Count Hunwald, as one of his most

attached courtiers; and that he should turn out a traitor proves in what a state of insecurity Oswin must have passed his days, and how completely the meshes of his enemy encompassed him round about. So true it is, as with their Head, so with the saints, their foes are they of their own household, and their wounds are received in the house of their friends. It is not probable that Oswin expected to escape death, though it was his duty to shun it; for all that he said showed him to be completely and calmly possessed by the presentiment of its nearness. Hunwald received him into his house, and promised to conceal him.

Meanwhile Oswy was not altogether satisfied. True it was that he was master of the kingdom of the Deiri without opposition: but was his usurpation likely to be stable while one so ardently beloved as Oswin was lying somewhere in exile? And was not his own personal hatred to be satisfied? In truth he had been balked of half his prey. He therefore commissioned Count Ethelwin, one of his officers, to take a troop of soldiers, seek for the fugitive king, and kill him. The search was not long; for the detestable Hunwald betrayed his guest. Ethelwin surrounded the castle with his soldiers in the silence of the night, while Hunwald was paying the homage of his lips to his kind master. Ethelwin entered and notified to Oswin the fatal sentence of the conqueror. At first the king was disturbed with the suddenness of the event and the additional distress of having been betrayed by one under such great obligations to him. But, recovering his calmness and his dignity, he fortified his

breast and tongue with the sign of the cross, and said to Ethelwin, "The sentence of your king depends upon the permission of my King." He entreated the Count to spare the life of his faithful servant, Tondhere; but he refused to survive his master. Both were slain together, and buried together, at Gilling, on the 20th day of August, 651 A.D.

So far as appears, St. Oswin remained unmarried. We may suppose that one who all his life long so earnestly coveted the best gifts was not likely to be without a holy ambition for the coronal of virgins, and that in virginity, that great fountain of alms-giving, and preceptress of humility, his holy soul would much delight. There are some of the saints whose lives seem to have been moulded by a heavenly vision or some supernatural intimation of their own destiny. This touch of the invisible world appears to draw them apart, to give a direction to their lives, a tone to their character, to be to them as it were a kind of individual sacrament vouchsafed to them. They seem to sit all their days beneath the shadow of this sacred revelation, and to sanctify themselves in its secret presence. Perhaps, too, it will be generally found that the saints whose lives have this peculiar feature most strongly (for in its measure may it not be the portion of all great saints?) have been more especially distinguished by humility and a mortified spirit. Thus with St. Oswin the heavenly intimation given him through St. Aidan that he should suffer martyrdom would doubtless haunt him perpetually, and be to a good man a constant source of self-restraint

and gentleness. For to be entrusted with a secret of the Lord seems to bring the Divine Presence nearer, and the abiding sense of that Presence would be sure to humble a man exceedingly. The secret life of sovereigns has generally been very different from the show of court-days; and as with St. Oswin, so in many signal cases has it pleased God by His grace to make it a long hidden martyrdom of pain and care, and suffering for the faith, and austere self-discipline. Blessed are the monarchs whose brows are girt with the crown of thorns, though we see but the diadem of gold!

Soon after Oswin's death (the monk of Tynemouth would have it immediately afterwards), his remains were translated from Gilling to Tynemouth, where St. Oswald had founded a monastery. It was deposited in a chapel built beneath a rock on the north side of the river, an oratory of our Blessed Lady; and for some time his place of sepulture was reverently visited. But the Gospel suffered continual eclipses, partial or total, on the sea-coasts of Northumberland from the frequent landings and invasions of the heathen Danes; so that in course of time the exact place of St. Oswin's burial was forgotten, and so remained until the eleventh century. There was at that time at Tynemouth a man of the name of Edmund, a very pious person who led a monkish life and wore a monkish dress, and continued day and night in devotion to Christ and the holy Mother. He did not belong to any monastery, professed no rule, and was not bound by any regular discipline. But though living in the world he was as a monk among

its crowds. It happened that after a vigil he fell asleep in the Church, and as he slept there appeared to him in a dream a person of a vivid colour and vigorous frame, tall of stature, and with a heavenly effulgence round him. Edmund gazed earnestly upon him, but, awe-struck by the majesty of his angelic countenance, did not venture to inquire who he was. At length the man called: "Brother Edmund! Brother Edmund!" Then Edmund with all reverence replied, "Who art thou, my lord?" "I am King Oswin, slain by Oswy, through the detestable treachery of Count Hunwald, and I lie in this Church unknown to all. Rise, therefore, and go to the Bishop Egelwin, and tell him to seek my body beneath the pavement of this oratory, and let him raise it up and re-inter it more becomingly in this same chapel." In consequence of this the body was sought, and found. Judith, the daughter of Baldwin, Earl of Flanders, and wife of Tosti, Earl of Northumberland, washed the martyrs' hair, still stained by blood; but except the hair and bones all had gone to dust. The feast of St. Oswin is kept on the 20th of August, it being the day of the solemn translation of his relics from the old oratory into the new Church of Our Lady at Tynemouth.

It would appear that Oswy afterwards repented of his crime, which William of Malmesbury imputes to malicious mischief-makers inciting him against St. Oswin. However, Eanfleda his queen, St. Edwin's daughter, got permission from her husband to found a monastery at Gilling wherein prayers should be said for the repose of Oswin's soul, and for the

pardon of the guilty Oswy. It was one of the many holy houses which fell before the ruthless Danes.

Let us quote once more the words of the devoted monk of Tynemouth.[1] "The martyr, in his glory, still invites the wealthy by his example to the tranquil joys of Paradise. For he did not attempt the way of sanctity, compelled by the urgency of poverty, or, as men are wont, by the feebleness of ailing health; but, freely drawn by the sole contemplation of the Creator, he lived in the purple of a king, as David did, poor and sorrowing; poor in spirit even while he abounded in the wealth and delicacy of a monarch; sorrowful in spirit, because he trusted not his heart to his abundance of good things. For the more he abounded, the less desire had he for his abundance. In the midst of a noisy court, which was ever too much for him, he fled far off, and remained in the solitude of his mind, even when his subjects thronged about him. Abroad he carried himself in a kingly way, but inwardly he was a king over his own affections, courageously exercising himself in the love of humility and poverty. He girded himself up to all spiritual exercises, but seemed to pour out his whole being in the corporal works of mercy. His plenty was the needy man's supply: the superfluities of the rich he deemed the necessaries of the

[1] This monk was originally of St. Albans, then prior of Wymundeham; he came to Tynemouth to give himself more completely up to the austerities of penance. What is said in the text of ailing health is touching, when we know that the writer suffered greatly at Tynemouth, and was restored to health through the intercession of his patron, St. Oswin.

poor. He thought a king owed most to those who could do least for him, and that justice was meant specially for the oppressed. And so was the holy King Oswin, because his people deserved not such a lord, slain by the sword of envy, and translated to the companies of the blessed angels."

Very many graces are said to have been granted at the tomb of the royal martyr, and through his potent intercession. A life of St. Oswin would be scarcely complete, if some mention was not made of these. Perhaps it would be a simpler and more religious temper which would regard such things as miracles really accorded to the pleading and merits of the blessed saint; there is, through God's mercy, a growing inclination among us to take these things reverentially, when there seems tolerable historical evidence in favour of them; and at any rate there is among many more a growing disinclination to speak lightly of such matters, and put them rudely aside. There is a pious suspense of mind which is surely an acceptable temper, more acceptable, it may be, than that mere hunger for the marvellous, which is very far indeed from calm discerning faith. However, we do not pretend to relate the following miracles either as sacred facts or as mere devotional fictions; they have an interest of another sort, which does not affect their possibly more solemn character, and for this lower interest we shall now put them before the reader.

If it evidence a poorer temper of mind and an age of cold hearts and incredulous intellects, yet surely it is allowable and edifying to dwell on the humanising influences which the beliefs and devotions of

the Catholic Church have had on rough ages and among turbulent nations. It is not the less God's mercy, though there may be a more direct and awful manifestation of Him in such things. For many a long year of fear and vexatious misrule the "Peace of the martyr" was a pleasant and a safe shade under which the dwellers on the bleak sea-shore of Durham and Northumberland were glad to cluster like an affrighted sheep-flock; a shadow cast by St. Oswin's memory from our Lady's House at Tynemouth far to the Cleveland Hills, and northward to the Tweed. The charities of life took root there with an assurance which the troubled times could not warrant: unnamed, unnumbered acts of peace, goodness, fidelity, restitution, self-restraint, were (so to speak) solemnised for the comfort of men through the "Peace of the martyr." It was *the Church making the world endurable*—her work in all ages, the way thereof, with fruitful diversity, different in every age.

We proceed then to relate three miracles, which particularly exemplify this. Let it be remembered that by miracles men are not only *helped*, but they are also *taught*. When, therefore, to the readers of one age the miracles of another long past away appear so grotesque as to provoke amusement, their seeming eccentricity is no ground for rejecting them. If men are to be taught, the teaching will be shaped for them, adapted to their way of looking at things, corresponding to their habits of thought, and as it were echoing the actual life and manners of the times. Supposing a miracle wrought for the conversion of a barbarous people,

will it not almost certainly have a barbarous aspect, and be what a philosophical age would deem a *gross* display of supernatural power or goodness? A barbarian doubting of the Gospel would, as in numberless recorded instances, put its truth to a gross, carnal, rude test—something the satisfaction of which would make a rude man believe; the missionary is inspired to accept the test, to venture his preaching upon it, works the required miracle, asked not in wantonness, but as a child would seek unwonted assurance for some unwonted promise; and is the miracle so wrought, so fitting for its purpose, thus actually bringing men into the Church of God, a suitable or decorous theme for elegant derision or playfully contemptuous narrative among the children of those barbarian ancestors whose simple-mannered ignorance it overruled to such a mighty and blissful end? Whether then the following miracles were wrought or not, they were *believed;* and such a faith would in rude times exert a most holy influence over manners and conduct, and in some sense vicariously discharge the sweetest office of law, while law was not yet come of age to discharge its own duties, namely, that of securing the happiness of private life, fostering and guaranteeing all the rights, jurisdictions, privileges, and subordinations of conjugal, filial, and fraternal piety, while it also inspired, ennobled, and ensured all the gentle hallowing restraints of what is called with an expressive homeliness,—good neighbourhood.

There is such a Christian virtue as hospitality, and the self-denial it for the most part involves may be that which chiefly gives it its Christian character.

It was a virtue much needed in unsettled times, and much practised. When people saw graces given to strangers at the tombs of their own local saints, they received a strong admonition to hospitality, most vividly conveyed. The following is a specimen of many such. There was a man of Norwich who had a profound reverence for the holy places where our Lord had trodden, spoken, and acted when on earth. Three times did his pious thirst after those far-off fountains of prayer and tears drive him over land and sea to Jerusalem, long, arduous, perilous as the pilgrimage was. Returning home after his third visit, he determined to go northward to pay his devotions at St. Andrews in Scotland, a place then regarded with singular veneration. He had, from long usage, become so accustomed to foreign diet that the rough cheer of English plenty threw him into a violent illness; this was accompanied every fifteen or sixteen days with excruciating spasms, and to gain relief from these seems to have been one, though not the sole object of this fresh pilgrimage to St. Andrews. On his journey he passed through Newcastle-on-Tyne. In that town dwelt a man named Daniel, whose wife was a very godly woman, and specially devoted to the entertainment and care of strangers; for which purpose she had built a house apart from her own dwelling. Here she received the Norwich pilgrim, and ministered to him with her own hands; and here he was seized with his fit of spasms. It wounded the heart of his hostess to hear how the poor pilgrim filled the house with his pitiful cries. She consoled him to the best of her power, and

furnished him with such comforts as she could, till after long agony his exhausted body found a little respite in sleep. In his sleep he dreamed a dream, or saw a vision. A man of a reverend countenance appeared to him, and asked him if he wished to recover from his sickness. "Yes, sir," he replied, "I covet it ardently." "Rise then in the morning," was the answer, "and hasten to St. Oswin, the king and martyr, so that on Tuesday next you may be present at the feast of the Invention of his relics, and by his merits there obtain the health you desire." The sick man inquired, "But who are you, sir, who promise me such good things?" "What have you to do with me? Go in faith and be healed." "Yet, sir," persisted the pilgrim, "I beseech you do not be angry, but tell me who you are, that by the authority of your name I may be assured of the solidity of your promise." Then the figure answered, "I am Aidan, formerly the Bishop of St. Oswin, and that you may believe, I will now by my touch cure the pain in your head, leaving you to be healed of your inward spasms by St. Oswin." So saying, he pressed upon the nose of the sleeping man, and immediately a copious flow of blood took place, which relieved his head. There was a maid watching by his bedside, and when she saw her patient covered with blood she called her mistress, who at the request of the sick man sent for the priest of the parish. To him he related the vision, saying that Oswin he had heard a little of, but he did not so much as know the name of Aidan. As he was unable to walk, one of the neighbours kindly offered to take him to Tyne-

mouth in his boat. They arrived there while the monks were in chapter, and laid the sufferer at the martyr's tomb, where he was presently healed of his disease.

If there ever was an age when Church holydays were multiplied to idleness and grew to be a burden to the land, there certainly have been ages when they were most kindly interruptions of the oppressive toils of poverty, most merciful restraints on landlords, and gentle mitigations of the hardships of the over-tasked peasantry. Now let us see how it was believed that St. Oswin interfered to vindicate for the poor the safe rest of his own festivals. Once, when all agricultural labour was suspended, a greedy clerk would not lose the day, but housed his grain. He was worldly wise; people noticed him, but in those days they would not envy such an one. Shortly, by some accident, his barn took fire, and all his grain was burned. Accident translated into the language of those times was St. Oswin's vengeance. Again, when Archarius was prior of Tynemouth, there dwelt there for a little while a most expert goldsmith of the name of Baldwin, whom the prior took into his service to regild the martyr's shrine. St. Oswin's day came round; there was feasting and praying and holyday at Tynemouth. Baldwin among the rest went to the feasting, and being an unsuspicious man, besides that it was St. Oswin's day, he did not close his shop-door so carefully as he might have done. His shop was close to the church, and among the crowds a thief managed to approach it unperceived, and carry away all the valuables he could lay hands on. This was a sacri-

legious breach of the "Martyr's Peace." The public road was open to the thief; he ran till he came to the limits of the "Peace," the border of the sanctuary, and there, though there was an open unhindered way before him, he could not move a step, but was miraculously rooted to the ground. Yet, though he could not advance, he could go here and there within the Peace as he pleased; but it was invisibly fenced, and he could not pass the bounds. However, he betook himself to a little inn within the purlieus, where, by his startled face, the levity of his deportment, and the incoherency of his speech, something was suspected, and he was arrested. Meanwhile Baldwin had become acquainted with his loss, and with a heavy heart was complaining at the martyr's tomb, when the news came that the thief had been found, and his goods restored. The criminal was immediately hanged, and the people feared, and glorified God for the wonderful protection of St. Oswin's Peace.

How beautiful it is amid the dazzling brightness, the wassail and the tournament, of the Middle Ages to catch a glimpse of some details of the unnamed poor! How touching when those details tell how the poor ran to their Church as their natural refuge, and how the Church succoured, comforted, avenged the wrongs of the slighted cottager, the helpless woman, the toil-worn serf! Here is a legend of St. Oswin's shrine, which is quite a Christian poem, very beautiful indeed. In the reign of William Rufus there was war on the Scottish border. William came to Newcastle-on-Tyne inflamed with ungovernable passion. The Scots had

wasted the country all round, and were then butchering old and young, priest and layman, in the poor city of Durham. William advanced, and they fled before him, for they heard of his burning rage. Meanwhile there came fifty of William's ships to the mouth of the Tyne, laden with corn from the West Angles, to supply the king during the Scottish war. The mariners were a rude, ungodly company, and as the king had left Newcastle, and there was no one to restrain them, they plundered the houses round about, and did not fear to violate St. Oswin's Peace. There was an old woman, so weak and old that she was obliged to support herself on a staff; each year she consumed wholly, with great pains and weary diligence, in weaving a poor little web; it was her annual hope and harvest, and the year's web was now lying finished by her. Whether she was walking on the shore carrying her web to sell it, or whether she was in her cottage, does not appear from the narrative; but at any rate she was attacked by one of the sailors, but firmly as she grasped her precious web he tore it out of her hands. She wept and sobbed, and besought him by her patron, St. Oswin, that he would give her back the web; the sailor scoffed both at St. Oswin and herself. The indignant old woman, with much effort, hobbled up to the monastery, and went to the martyr's tomb, and begged him to redress her wrongs. "God," says the monk, "Who despiseth not the tears of widows, heard the old woman's tearful sobs through the merits of the holy martyr." But she left the tomb dejected: no answer came to her prayers; night passed, and the web was not

returned, and morning brought a fair wind. She saw the white sails proudly set, and the fleet sweep down the sea towards Lindisfarne: her web was there, her one web, her year's livelihood; St. Oswin had not heard her prayer. The ships at length disappeared; they made a prosperous voyage to Coquet Island, a little to the north of Tynemouth. It is a rocky place, but the sea was calm, and the sailors careless. Now, without a wind or a cloud the sea began to grow; and billows rose and rose, and the heavy swell thundered on the Coquet rocks. It seemed like a miracle, so tranquil, so beautiful the day. Still the sea rose, the ships were entangled among the shoals, they dashed one against another, were broken and sunk, and all hands perished. The north wind came, and the wrecks and corpses were all drifted ashore near Tynemouth. Not a thing stolen but what the sea gave it up again faithfully, for it was doing a divine work. The cottagers had hid themselves in the woods and caves, fearing the return of the sailors. They had returned in another guise than they expected, a piteous return. Then the people left their coverts and came down to the shore, and each scrupulously confined himself to taking up what had belonged to him. Harmless on the wet sand lay a corpse, with the old woman's web in its hand; her lameness made her late, and she was among the last to recover her property. "O cruelest of men," she said to the dead sailor, "yesterday I asked you and you would not hear me; I asked my lord and patron, and he has heard me. Now you give up unwittingly the web you stole most wittingly; now you pay in death the

penalty you deserved to pay when alive, because you despised the saint in me." The monk draws a conclusion to this effect: let no one think the saints ever turn their ears from the desire of the poor; they only delay in order to answer their prayers more wonderfully. Such was a monkish doctrine in the Middle Ages; what wonder the poor so loved the monks?

THE POOR IN THE MIDDLE AGES

I.

It is the Past ye worship; ye do well,—
If the sweet dues of reverence which ye pay
Be equably disposed, nor lean one way
For lack of balance in your thoughts. To spell
The Past in its significance, to ponder,
In the embrace of judgment, fear and love
In the disguises of those days,—should move
More than the weak idolatry of wonder,
Or beauty-stricken eye: they should grow part
Of the outgoings of your daily heart;—
And be not scared by show of kings and knights,
As if those times were in such gauds embraced;
Remember that the People claim a Past,
And that the Poor of Christ have lineal rights.

II.

They, in whose hearts those mighty times have wrought
Most deeply, have upon their aspect gazed
As on an eclipse, with their eye upraised
Through the subduing mean of sombre thought,
And then it is a very fearful vision
To see the uncounted Poor, who strayed forlorn
As an untended herd, with natures worn
To heartlessness through every-day collision

With arrogance and wrong. Proud knights, fair dames,
And all the pomp of old chivalric names,
Fade, like a mimic show, from off the past;
And to the Christian's eye ungathered flowers
Of suffering meekly borne, in lowliest bowers,
With solemn life fill in the populous waste.

Such are the thoughts which a Catholic may well have when he is humbly venturing to interpret the ways of God, pleading with people to have reverent thoughts about things which God *may* have used, and so are sacred evermore, and trying to win their love to all the benign and humanising functions of the Church, even to such old realities and local blessings as St. Oswin's Peace.

THE LIFE OF

S T. E B B A

VIRGIN AND ABBESS, A.D. 683

THE royal house of Northumbria was fertile in saints. St. Edwin and St. Oswald, St. Oswin and St. Ebba, and then that saint, dedicated in her cradle, the blessed Abbess Elfleda, were all kinsfolk. It would be interesting, on an extensive view of the history of the saints, to see how in one age one particular class of society, and in another age a different class, furnished the Church with saints. At one time royalty seemed the chief fountain, as prolific as the episcopate itself; at another time doctors were given to the Church, not luminary after luminary, but many together as if one called out the other: another while the saints are found mostly to have sanctified themselves in the pastoral and parochial labours;[1] then again they are hermits

[1] This has been especially the case in the later ages of the Church, and is, perhaps, an index of not a very favourable or healthy state of things. Most of those for whose beatification processes are now forming are parish or missionary priests: it is long since the Church canonised a doctor, so that the Jesuits may well have wished to have their gentle-spirited Bellarmine among the publicly honoured saints, if so it might have been. The title of Doctor has been loudly claimed

in the woods and caves, or such as have climbed the heights of heroic penance in the religious orders, or such as have divined the wants of their times and been themselves the founders of new communities. Then again, at another season by some mysterious impulse the Church lengthens her cords and pushes out her boundaries here and there, and a band of missionaries swell the noble army of martyrs or of confessors. Now, without putting out of sight the blessed Paraclete who dwells within the Church and moves her as He listeth and causes that all her motions are mysterious and imperfectly comprehended, we may find some reasons why this should be so; and at any rate draw one lesson from that striking feature of the sacred history of the Saxon Heptarchy; for the numerous royal saints which adorn it do certainly give it a very marked and special character. The lesson is this, that high station and worldly grandeur only or chiefly produce saints, when such station and grandeur do of themselves involve hardship, suffering, and insecurity; so that it must be suffering, either imposed by God, or suffering self-imposed, whereby men are sanctified. And it is important to note this

for St. Alphonso Liguori; surely most unreasonably. Expertness and erudition in the authorities of Moral Theology can hardly establish that claim for any one; and whoever reads St. Alphonso's polemical and dogmatical treatises will see that the title of Doctor can hardly belong to that blessed saint, whose seraphic heart was best outpoured upon the Passion, the Nativity, and Sacramental Presence of our Lord, and the honour of His ever-virgin Mother. It is said the Congregation have refused the claim which the Redemptorists set up for their holy founder.

whenever we can; because, though one would think it written as with a sunbeam on the pages of the New Testament, an age of luxury, domestic peace and social comforts would fain denounce the bare enunciation of it as a heresy which—strange perversion of words!—brings to nought the doctrine of the *Cross*.

As in primitive times the bishop's throne did but raise a man more into the view of his persecutors, so in the seventh century in England to be a prince or a princess was only to be more liable to vicissitude and a disturbed life than the humbler ranks of people were. Exile, deposition, and murder were the foremost retinue of a king, and, of course, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, shared his changeful fortunes. But of all the members of the royal households the princesses seem to have been in the most unfavourable position. Not only was the weakness of their sex to confront the rough manners of the times, but they were looked upon for the most part as means of consolidating and extending power by being given in marriage to other princes, pagan it might be, or ruthless and profligate even though Christian by name. Thus, if a royal maiden wished to dedicate herself to holy virginity, she became at once, as the world counts things, useless to her family; a means of influence was wasted; her father or her brother had an alliance the less, if she was allowed to take the veil. And yet it was under these very circumstances that the Saxon abbesses, the wise spiritual mothers of our first monasteries, were mostly of royal blood; and in the

sackcloth of penance, not with the patronage of power, our queens were nursing mothers to the Saxon Church. One of these holy abbesses was St. Ebba, of Coldingham, the scanty notices of whose hidden life we are now to put together.

St. Ebba was the daughter of King Ethelfrid, and the sister of St. Oswald and half-sister of King Oswy. Of her early life nothing whatever is known except that from her infancy she was very religiously disposed, and averse to the pomps and pleasures which her rank opened out to her. Doubtless the example of her brother, St. Oswald, and the conversation of St. Aidan, during that holy prelate's visits to the court, went far to aid the work of divine grace within her soul. But the ruling desire of her heart was to consecrate herself as a virgin to the perpetual service of her heavenly Spouse. This was, says the author of her life,[1] in an age when persons of high birth esteemed their nobility to consist principally in the humble service of our Lord, and those were most highly exalted, who with greatest submission undertook the cross of Christ. At that time innumerable congregations both of men and women were sprinkled through the whole island, severally embracing the spiritual warfare of our Lord. Yea, sometimes in the same place persons of both sexes, men and virgins, under the government of one spiritual father, or one spiritual mother, armed with the sword of the Spirit, did exercise the combats of chastity against the powers of darkness, enemies thereto. The institute and practice of these was

[1] Translated in Cressy, xviii. 14.

imitated by St. Ebba, who for the love she bore to the Son of God even in the flower of her youth contemned whatsoever was great or desirable in the world. She preferred the service of our Lord before secular nobility, spiritual poverty before riches, and voluntary abjection before honours. For though descended from royal parents, yet by faith she overcame the world; by virtues, beauty; and by spiritual graces, her own sex.

When it has pleased God to inspire any of His servants to attempt some great thing for His sake, His Providence for the most part so orders it that some temptation shall intervene to try the strength and heartiness of the resolution. If the temptation is overcome, so much the higher place does His servant take; and if the resolution gives way in the trial, there is often mercy in it even then: for men, especially when entering on a course of penance, will attempt things which in them it is immodest to attempt, and betrays an inadequate sense of their former demerits; and it seems better to fail in carrying out a holy resolution than to carry it out and then apostatise from the state of life to which it has solemnly committed us. The most marked temptations of the saints have generally been contemporary with the signal acts of virtue which afterwards rendered their memory dear to the Church. Thus the youthful Ebba was not allowed quietly to satisfy her thirst for holy virginity; the dazzling offers of the world must come and try her strength; the snare of seeking what is nowadays called a more extended sphere of usefulness must tempt the simplicity of her self-renunciation. Alas! what

a miserable, dwarfish standard of religious practice do these smooth words bring about among us now! The highest notion we are allowed to have of rank, wealth, and mental powers is that they should be exercised to the full as means of influence for good ends. The world understands this and does not quarrel with the doctrine. But where is there about this teaching that foolishness in men's eyes which must ever mark the science of the cross? Self-abjection surely is the highest of all oblations: to forget the world or to hate it is better far than to work for it. One is the taste of ordinary Christians: the other the object of the saints. We read of St. Arsenius that when he became a monk he studied to the utmost to conceal his immense learning, and was ever humbling himself to seek spiritual advice from the most simple of his brethren. Rodriguez remarks of St. Jerome, that though of noble birth there is not so much as a covert allusion to it in all his voluminous writings, full as they are of autobiography: and the flights of the holy Abbot Pinuphius[1] from what would be considered his sphere of duty, however improper objects for our imitation, exhibit a *view* widely different from that whose tyrannous reign would now cramp the energies of good men and keep them in an ineffective mediocrity from which the world has nothing to fear.

The temptation of St. Ebba came from the offer of a splendid marriage. Her suitor was no less a person than Edan, the king of the Scotch. Of course

[1] Cassian, Inst. iv. 30.

the inducements were many; the strengthening of her family, the almost unlimited means of doing good and serving the Church, the religious advantages of being among the Scotch at that time, whose fervent zeal and purity were famous, and to whose usages her brother Oswy was almost bigotedly attached. The vulgar allurements of power and royalty would not touch her; and for the other motives the simplicity of a self-renouncing spirit was too much. She rejected her royal suitor, and from the hands of St. Finan, Bishop of Lindisfarne, she received the veil in token that she was now married once for all to a heavenly Spouse. In proportion as a Christian receives any gift from the Lord, does he feel a growing desire to impart it unto others: this it is which breeds that love of souls, whose crowning point is martyrdom. We read that Ebba was not content to dedicate her own virginity to Christ, but that she longed to draw with her a band of virgins into the same divine espousals. Her brother Oswy furthered her project, and with his assistance she founded a nunnery in Durham, on the river Darwent, at a place still called Ebchester.

As the royal house of Northumbria may almost be called a family of saints, and as it was by Oswy's aid that Ebba founded her first nunnery, it may be allowed us to take this opportunity of saying something of that king. Considering his deep repentance, and the signal services he afterwards rendered to the Church, it is painful to keep his reign in the background, and leave his memory under the dark shadow which the death of St. Oswin casts upon it.

It would indeed be contrary to the charity of the saints that their lives should bring up Oswy's atrocious crime, and put out of view his penitence, and the virtues of his after-life. It is natural we should wish to adorn, so far as truth will allow, the chronicles of our Saxon kings, when, besides many saints, seven kings before Ceolwulph laid down the purple for the coarse garment of the ascetic monk.

It is not an uncommon thing both in history and in life to see a man working towards a much-coveted end by every means, right or wrong; and when the station is gained, the ambition satisfied, and the hunger of sin stayed, the man's nature seems to right itself, as though the disturbing force were removed; or perhaps the very responsibility of his office, as has been the case with some bishops, acts as a sort of moral stimulus, and makes him discharge with nobility the duties of a station which he arrived at through ignoble ways and a mean ambition. But this sort of silent growing change is something very different from Christian penitence: it wants its roughness, its completeness, its self-revenge; and the early Saxon character would either have gone on from bad to worse, or have changed for the better in a more real and Christian way. So it was with Oswy, when he was roused from that dream of ambition or of angry passions which brought about the murder of St. Oswin. He seems to have become a real, hearty penitent, and to have devoted himself in every way to serve the holy Church. It was chiefly through Oswy that the Middle Angles were converted to the faith; for when the young King Peada came to sue for the

hand of Alcfleda, his natural daughter, Oswy refused to give her to a pagan, and persuaded Peada to be instructed in the faith; which he cordially embraced, being urged in addition by the friendship of Oswy's son, Alfrid, who had married his sister, Kyneburga, herself a saint. Neither was Oswy less successful in re-establishing the Gospel among the East Saxons, who had exiled their bishop Mellitus. Sigebert, their king, was closely united to Oswy in the bonds of friendship, and was accustomed to pay frequent visits at the Northumbrian Court. Oswy lost no opportunity of urging upon him the excellency of the Christian faith. He unveiled the stupid errors of idolatry, and spoke of the spiritual majesty of God and the terrors of His future Judgment, until Sigebert's heart was touched, and he received the sacrament of baptism from the hands of St. Finan, and from Oswy the holy Bishop Cedd, who accompanied him into his kingdom. Oswy's piety was again displayed on the occasion of his victory over King Penda. He consecrated his infant daughter, Elfleda, to the perpetual service of Christ; he also set aside twelve small estates where twelve bands of monks were always to reside, and pray for the peace of the nation. The king, moreover, took a warm interest in ecclesiastical matters, and was devotedly attached to the Scotch usages, as we learn from the part he took in the disputes between St. Colman and St. Wilfrid: though he was in the end completely convinced by St. Wilfrid's reasons, and gave up his former opinion in a way which reflected the greatest credit upon himself. He seems to have

been a man so completely in earnest, that he entered into the love and reverence for the Holy See, with a zeal equal to that which he had before shown towards the Scotch usages in which he had been brought up. He sent Wighard to Rome to be consecrated archbishop by Pope Vitalian; and, Wighard dying before his consecration, the holy father addressed a letter to the king: and finally, when Oswy died, he was preparing to quit his kingdom and go on pilgrimage to Rome, and end his days among the holy places, with St. Wilfrid for his companion. He was buried in Whitby Abbey, and the opinion which men had of his sanctity is sufficiently shown by his being mentioned in the English Martyrology on the 15th of February.

From this digression, which seemed but an act of equity to her half-brother, we may now return to St. Ebba. How long she stayed at the newly founded nunnery of Ebchester we do not know. It appears, however, that for some reason or other she left it, and founded the famous double monastery of Coldingham, in Berwickshire, where two distinct communities, of men and women, lived under her single government as abbess. It was in this monastery that Ebba received St. Etheldreda of Ely, and taught her the monastic discipline; and the very fact that such an eminent saint was formed under her spiritual guidance gives us some idea of the wisdom, discretion, and holiness of Ebba herself. Indeed, we are told that the whole kingdom regarded Ebba as a spiritual mother, and that the reputation of her sanctity was spread far and wide. And one fact is recorded which of itself

speaks volumes. It is well known that St. Cuthbert carried the jealousy of intercourse with women, characteristic of all the saints, to a very extraordinary pitch. It appeared as though he could say with the patriarch Job, "I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?" And for many ages after females were not admitted into his sanctuary. Yet such was the reputation of St. Ebba's sanctity, and the spiritual wisdom of her discourse, that St. Bede informs us that when she sent messengers to the man of God, desiring him to come to her monastery, he went and stopped several days, in conversation with her, going out of the gates at nightfall and spending the hours of darkness in prayer, either up to his neck in the water, or in the chilly air.

It would seem that in the case of Coldingham the plan of a double community did not at first succeed. It is obvious that St. Ebba would be compelled to entrust a great portion of the government to inferior officers who were males. Anyhow the monastery, even under her rule, fell into such a state of lukewarm remissness as to provoke the Divine vengeance. We cannot for a moment suppose that the holy mother either caused or countenanced such a state of things, but somehow or other it was maintained in spite of her; indeed they managed to keep her in ignorance of it. Meanwhile it pleased God to reveal to the austere and devout St. Adamnan the future destruction of the whole monastery by fire; yet even this awful judgment carried with it an attestation to the sanctity of Ebba: for it was promised that this

great judgment should not be in her time. St. Adamnan did not venture at first to reveal this sad secret to his abbess. His mind was burdened with it, as the young Samuel's with the knowledge of Eli's gloomy fortunes. But among his brother monks it was too much for him to keep silence from good words; his heart grew hot within him, and at last he spake with his tongue. The matter soon came to the ears of the abbess. She sent for St. Adamnan, and inquired minutely of the vision, asking why he had not made her acquainted with it sooner. He said he had concealed it in order to spare her the affliction, and that, furthermore, it had been made known to him that this ruin would not happen in her days. The very knowledge of the revelation produced a temporary return to strictness; but after the death of the holy abbess the prophecy was fulfilled. Yet was it rather a fiery baptism than a fierce destruction to that holy house; for the chastity of St. Ebba of the seventh century seems to have descended upon her namesake, the sainted abbess of Coldingham, in the ninth, whose daring piety suggested to her nuns that they should all disfigure and mutilate their features with a razor, when the Danes were coming upon them, in order to quench the brutal lusts of their ferocious assailants, and so preserve their chastity.

Doubtless, amid the peaceful exercises of her monastic home, Ebba's declining years were saddened by the knowledge of what was coming upon her beloved Coldingham. Added to this there would be the harassing suspicion of a continued laxity which it was difficult to trace out, and eradi-

cate from her community: and the saints have at once such acquaintance with themselves, and such a clear vision of the real hatefulness of sin, that they seem to ordinary Christians to become untruthful in their excess of self-reproach. Ebba would no doubt be full of self-accusation. She would consider *her* sins, *her* misgovernment, *her* want of vigilance, to be the cause of this laxity. She would dwell upon her own demerits, and by a kind of natural effort, such as humility is wont to put forth, she would remove out of sight the heavenly intimation of the delayed judgment, and refuse to be consoled by it. But if she wept the more, and prayed the more, if she redoubled her austerities till her cell was stained with the blood of the secret discipline, she would *act* not the less but the more energetically for her increased penance. Age, which even to saints is often allotted as a time of rest, a tranquil antechamber of the new world so soon to be entered, was no interval of rest to her. A long, weary, thankless task was hers. She had to fight with a corrupt community, to struggle with untoward nuns and stubborn monks, to be baffled yet not to faint, repulsed but returning to the attack, to keep the heart of the mother while discharging the vindictive office of the judge. Endless were the things which exercised her weary vigilance,—cold or hurried recitation of the office, irreverent celebration of the mass, want of plainness in the refectory, languor in the manual labour, evasions of holy obedience, the spirit of self-seeking, which amidst the bare walls, unfurnished cells and hard life of a monastery finds nutriment enough.

So went the years of Ebba's age: not in tranquil meditation on the Song of Songs, not in the spiritual delights of cloistered seclusion, not in the gentle ascents of mystic contemplation, not in rapture, repose, or the sweet forestallings of heavenly espousals, but wrestling with the evil and the foul spirits who possessed her monastery, bruised and wounded and wearied, and meeting death while yet covered with the dust and blood of battle, and the contest's unseemly disarray, and victory not yet certified. Strange harbour for a gentle nun was that old age of hers! Yet was she more than conqueror. She sanctified herself in that unseasonable strife, for it was mercifully sent her to trade with and multiply her merits. And if judgment still came on Coldingham, who knows what good she may have done to single souls, how many became penitents and passed away in peace before the fire came, or how great the remnant was of those who suffered the loss, yet held them fast by God, took the judgment and glorified Him in it, and grew in the spirit of compunction? Who knows if the holy priest who told St. Bede of St. Adamnan's prophecy was not one of those with whom the abbess travailed in birth a second time till Christ was formed in them? Certainly it is recorded that partly through the revelation given to St. Adamnan, and partly through the judicious rigours of the holy abbess, a great though not lasting reformation took place at Coldingham, and that she did not live to witness its second degeneracy: though its future strictness and purity after its punishment may have been earned by the

blessed intercession of its sainted foundress, when she was called to her reward. "Full of virtues and good works she departed to her heavenly Spouse" on the 25th of August 683 or 684, about four years before St. Cuthbert. She was buried in her own monastery; miracles were wrought through her intercession, and apparitions of the blessed abbess were vouchsafed, which are recorded in her life, and other tokens given, whereby the Church was certified of her sanctity, and enrolled her among the Saxon Saints.

THE LIFE OF

ST. ADAMNAN

MONK OF COLDINGHAM, A.D. 689

Of this blessed saint and the heights of his heroic penance very little is known, but enough to make us wish to know more. A brief notice of him will naturally follow the life of St. Ebba. There are, however, two remarks suggested by his life, on which it may not be amiss to say a few words, considering the practical end which these memoirs of the saints have in view.

First we may observe that what little is known of St. Adamnan is connected with the decay of fervour in the monastery of Coldingham. To a pious person, surely, no matter what his opinions may be, the degeneracy of religious institutes and orders must be a humbling and distressing subject for reflection. Yet by literary men of later days, and especially by Protestants and other heretics, this degeneracy has been laid hold of with almost a desperate eagerness either for the purpose of sneering at religion altogether, or vilifying the holy Roman Church, or discountenancing the strictness of Catholic morals. Now let it be admitted fully

that this degeneracy is a fact, and that it has taken place in many instances almost incredibly soon after the first fervour of a new institute, always excepting, as truth compels us, the most noble and glorious company of St. Ignatius, which, next to the visible Church, may perhaps be considered the greatest standing miracle in the world. History certainly bears witness to this decay; but it must not be stated in the exaggerated way usual to many. It was not till the end of the tenth century that the decline of monastic fervour began to lead to abuses and corruptions; and for at least six centuries what almost miraculous perfection, heavenly love, self-crucifying austerities, mystical union with God, and stout-hearted defence of the orthodox faith reigned among the quietly succeeding generations of the Egyptian cenobites and solitaries! In the thirteenth century again the Church interfered, and at her touch, as if with the rod of Moses, there sprang forth those copious streams which satisfied the extraordinary thirst of Christendom in those times. The revered names of St. Dominic and St. Francis may remind us of what that age did. And when was the Church of Rome ever so great, ever so obviously the mother of saints, or when did she ever so wonderfully develop the hidden life within her, as in the sixteenth century? St. Ignatius, St. Francis Xavier, St. Francis Borgia, St. Francis of Sales, St. Philip Neri, St. Felix of Cantalice, and many others, sprang almost simultaneously from the bosom of a Church so utterly corrupt and anti-Christian that part of mankind deemed it necessary to fall off from her lest their souls should not be

saved! Stated then fairly and moderately, let the fact of monastic degeneracy be admitted, and what follows? Is it anything more than an illustration of the Catholic doctrine of original sin? Is it a fit or decent subject of triumph to miserable sinners who share personally in the corruption of their fellows? When such boastings are introduced into historical panegyrics of constitutions, parliaments, monarchies, republics, federacies and the like, what is it but an *à fortiori* argument against such mere worldly institutions? If a company of men or women leave their homes, enter upon a joyless life of poverty, singleness, and obedience, to work, to beg, to pray, to sing, to watch, to fast, to scourge themselves, and behold! in a century or so, they degenerate and abandon the strictness of their institute, what must become of a corporation gathered together for gain and for aggrandisement? Either it must grow corrupt in a still shorter time, or, as the other alternative, having been corrupt from the beginning, as being secular, it will proceed to such an extremity of wickedness that nations, or kings, or people, as the case may be, will rise and tread it out of the earth as something to be endured no longer. Surely there is something stupid, as well as unmanly, in this fierce exultation over the degeneracy of monastic orders. Roman law, the feudal system, chivalry, the municipalities of the Middle Ages—what light must such a course of reasoning throw on these things, so often set forth and illustrated with all the splendours of historical eloquence? One would imagine that to be a really philosophical historian heart and feeling were

required, a strong sense of fellowship with our kind, a humbling acknowledgment of what is evil, and above all an assiduous detection of what is, through God's mercy, honourable, pure, and good; and what a different object would the Church of the dark ages be in a history written on principles like these?

But readers as well as writers have often exhibited a strange delight in these laboured invectives against monastic degeneracy; and this is very natural. It would be very unpleasant for us to pray so many hours, to get up at nights, to fare badly, to sleep on boards, to be poor, to have somebody else's will to do instead of our own, to spend summer days amid the fumes of crowded hospitals, to wear hair-shirts, and so forth; and we cannot help feeling a little angry with people who did so; because, however clear it may be that it was all part and parcel of Romish corruption, there *is* a kind of lingering irritable feeling within us that there was, on the face of it, to say the least, something more evangelical about such a life than about days spent in the luxurious houses, the costly furniture, varied meals, literary pastimes, elegant entertainments, smooth conventions, of modern society, notwithstanding the Sunday sermon, the carriage, the stove, the cushion, and the pew—our admonitions of the unseen world, our demonstrations of faith in the truth of the Gospel. Well—but let *readers* think a little. The monastic orders grew very corrupt; yet still it may not follow that there is any inexorable necessity of leading a *comfortable* life. The Dominicans began to eat flesh! The

Carmelites to put on shoes! The Cluniacs to wear leather garments and to have more than two dressed dishes! But supposing all these things were declinations from a rule they were bound to keep, did they, even the congregations which remained unreformed, did they subside into an easy, indulgent life, and put the awkward precepts of the Gospel out of sight as we do? Do people, when they read of an Order declining from its rule, and moralise on *it*, rather than on *themselves*, as readers are unhappily prone to do, do they remember that in that *fallen* monastery were nocturns, and the diurnal hours, and fasts, and vigils, and silence, and celibacy, and sundry other very mortifying observances? A sandalled Carmelite cannot be brought to the level of modern comfort, self-indulgence, or even of idleness, generally considered the exclusive characteristic of a monk. Take the Benedictine congregations in all their changes, from Bernon of Gigni to John de Rancé of La Trappe, and the life which the easiest among them led was something far more penitential, austere, devoted and unearthly, than what we should deem the very heights of a rigid perfection. It were better to take shame to ourselves: the life of the least strict Order would be, it is feared, an impracticable standard of holiness for us, accustomed to the hourly exercise of freedom and self-will.

It is quite conceivable, however, that a Catholic reader should feel pained and in a degree perplexed when the lives of the saints bring him into immediate contact with any flagrant instance of monastic degeneracy, as in this case of Coldingham while

under the government of St. Ebba. But it does not follow that a state of laxity has grown up in the abbey while under the rule of the saint. It may many times be an evil of old standing, too far gone to admit of remedy, and perhaps even brought to a head by the energetic measures of reform attempted by the superior. And again the horror and hatred of sin produced in an earnest and sensitive mind by the sight of degeneracy may not unfrequently have been God's instrument in exciting that eminent spirit of compunction which distinguishes the saints who have lived amidst such unhappy circumstances, and at the same time the decay of fervour among those around them and their own inability to stem the gathering torrent may have been the special trials designed for their sanctification. St. Benedict might have set his affections too strongly on his beloved abbey of Monte Cassino, and we know how he was tried by the distressing foreknowledge of its destruction. In the same way many of the circulars addressed by St. Alphonso Liguori to his congregation of Redemptorists exhibit not unfrequently almost an anguish of spirit at the creeping in of any little custom which threatened to mar the perfectness of poverty and self-renunciation, such as using carriages on mission, paying any distinctive attention to the father who preached the evening sermon, putting mouldings above the doors of their cells, and the like. Moreover, the whole history of Robert and the monks of Molesme shows that a community bent on laxity can always be more than a match for the abbot, no matter whether judicious gentleness or judicious severity come uppermost in

his character. Innocent the Third was foiled over and over again in trying to compel the Roman nuns to keep cloister; and when at length three cardinals effected it, it was only through the help of the wonder-working Dominic. Thus a corrupt or degenerate community under the governance of a saint does not afford any ground for imputing feebleness or fault to the superior; it may be in the one case the trial which perfects his holiness, or in the other the very originating cause, speaking humanly, of his greater strictness and thirst after perfection.

We have not forgotten St. Adamnan all this while. His being known to us only through the degeneracy of the house of which he was a son has led us to make this first prefatory remark on the subject of monastic degeneracy altogether. We have still another observation to make, but it is wholly connected with the saint himself.

We started by saying that very little is known of St. Adamnan; but it so happens that that little is of a peculiarly instructive nature to ourselves, giving us a lesson where perhaps we most of all need it, namely, by illustrating the character of true Christian repentance. Sacramental confession does not exist among us *as a system:* penance has no tribunals in the Anglican Church. Of course many consequences result from this, such as that it makes our ecclesiastical system so startlingly unlike anything primitive that the long prevalent arrogation to ourselves of a primitive model seems an almost unaccountable infatuation. This is perhaps not of paramount importance to a com-

munity which has a duty nearer home and more at hand, that is, reconciliation with the present Catholic Church. But those consequences of wanting confession which have to do with the character of our practical religion, and the peril and safety of our souls, *are* of paramount importance. Now one of the features of modern religion (we are not speaking of Catholic countries), which would have struck the ancient Christians as a perplexity, is this: an immense body of baptized Christians lead the years of early manhood in negligence, irreverence, nay even in the mortal sins of unchastity; dissipation is a weary thing in its own nature, and in time such men grow more staid, more outwardly moral, more decorously respectful towards the ordinances of religion; they enter on their professions, marry, settle in life, and by an imperceptible process slide into good Christian people. There is no violent sundering between their past lives and their new ones; no strongly marked penances; no suspicion that penances are needed; no notion of the self-revenge of godly sorrow; they think, and people say it for them, that everybody has a certain amount of wildness which he must run through; that there is nothing shocking if only a man run through it in youth, and then all is as it should be; with no other change than such as time and selfishness will naturally bring about; the dissolute, unchaste youth becomes all that we can desire and esteem as a professional married man. These smooth transmutations in baptized persons not excommunicated would surely have been a perfect puzzle to a man of the second

century, till he came to understand them; and then as surely they would have been a perfect abomination, so very little would they meet with his ideas of Christian repentance. What would have been his criticism on the ecclesiastical system which presented such a phenomenon it may be as well not to conjecture. Of course it is clear that sacramental confession would soon purge the atmosphere of such phenomena. To those, then, who will receive it, St. Adamnan may read a lesson on the entireness, completeness, energy, and enduring self-revenge of penance; the more so as this is all we know about him, except that God seems to have set His seal upon the blessed saint's austerity, by favouring him with the revelation of the tremendous judgment about to fall on his brother monks of Coldingham.

St. Adamnan of Coldingham was a Scot by birth. It is not known how old he was when he took the monastic habit; but we are informed that during his youth he had committed some mortal sin of a very grievous kind. It is spoken of by St. Bede as a single action, not as an habitual course of wickedness; and, therefore, putting it at the worst as a deed of bloodshed, and comparing the circumstances of his times with the circumstances of ours, it can hardly have been so bad as a long deliberate indulged habit of unchastity in young persons enjoying the advantages of a Christian education. It can hardly have been so bad, one would think, in the eye of the Church, and as a single act it cannot have had that utterly debasing influence over his whole nature which a sinful habit must

inevitably exercise. However, it pleased God to give Adamnan deep and keen sentiments of compunction, apparently as soon as the fever of temptation had subsided and he had come to a right mind. He is described as being most "direfully horrified" at his sin, especially when he thought of the intolerable strictness of the judgment to come.

What is the first step which a rightly instructed Christian must take, when it pleases God to give him the grace of compunction? Clearly he must resort to the consolations of the Gospel and the merits of the Saviour as laid up in the sacrament of penance. The "albs of his baptism" have become filthy; great are the mercies of God that the sackcloth of the penitent is left for him. Adamnan, with befitting humility, repaired to a priest whom he judged competent to instruct him in the way of salvation, and begged to learn in what way he could best avoid the wrath to come. When the priest had heard his confession, he said, "A great wound requires a careful healing; you must, therefore, be as instant as you can in fasts, psalms, and prayers, in order that *by preoccupying the Face of the Lord*[1] *in confession*, you may come to find Him propitious." Adamnan, youth as he was, saw nothing stern in the unworldly life laid down for him; the horrors of a stained conscience had quite eclipsed the gay temptations of opening manhood, and the sunny prospects of the almost untried world. Doubtless it was not altogether the expected fulfilment of boyhood's day-dreams;

[1] Ps. xciv. Vulg.

but the fetters of sin—they were galling him, and everything seemed light in comparison of them. He answered as a young man was likely to do, readily and generously, yet with something of forwardness; it was not unlike the answer of the royal-hearted brothers that would have the right and the left of their Blessed Lord, and who did through His grace, and acceptance of their forwardness, come to sit on heavenly thrones. "I am a youth," said Adamnan boldly, "and I am vigorous in body; whatever you shall impose upon me, I can easily endure to go through with it, if only I may be saved in the day of the Lord; nay, I could do it though I were to pass the whole night in prayer standing, and spend the whole week in abstinence." Many repentances begin as promisingly as this, with a good hatred of half-measures; perhaps that so few go on as well may be owing in part to the want of intelligent confessors and directors.

Adamnan, fortunately, had met with a wise and holy priest. He satisfied his penitent's craving for austerity, while he restrained what was but impulse in it. "It is too much," said the good man, "for you to go the whole week without food; it is enough for you to fast two or three days in it; do this for the present. I will return to you in a short time, and then I will explain to you more fully what you are to do, and how long your penance is to last." Having then described to him the method of his penance (mensura pœnitendi) the priest departed, and Adamnan began his new life. Meanwhile, some sudden business called his con-

fessor over to Ireland, of which country he was a native, and there he died. Adamnan seems to have regarded this event as a token that it was God's will his penance should last his whole lifetime, and he ever after regarded the priest's injunction to go on till he came again, as a sacred command. He led a life of the strictest continence, took the monastic habit and vows, often spent entire nights in prayer, and ate only on Thursdays and Sundays, taking no sustenance of any kind during the rest of the week. This very austere life, which was at first sustained by the fear of the Divine Wrath, became in a while easy through the sweetness of the Divine Love, while he was cheered by looking out for the promised reward in the life to come. It did not seem to him servile to ponder his reward; he did not refine upon his religious feelings, but loving God with all his heart and soul, and showing forth the reality of that love by the self-chastisements of penance, he could say with the psalmist, "Inclinavi cor meum ad faciendas justificationes tuas in æternum, propter retributionem."

Such was the repentance of Adamnan: such was the repentance of a Christian in the seventh century: and though some may say that the doctrine of penance was very corrupt in St. Adamnan's days, there certainly were a great many things in it strikingly resembling St. Paul's carefulness, clearing of themselves, indignation, fear, vehement desire, zeal and revenge, whereof he speaks to the Corinthians. There was plainly a new self and an old self in Adamnan, cognisable by himself and his acquaintances; and it is the want of this which makes us

fear so sadly for the unsoundness of that quiet, gradual, complacent change which lifts the character with years (as if time itself were a sacrament) from the impure, dissolute youth to the sober husband, moral citizen, and kind neighbour. Time *has* a healing power, but its healing is not sacramental. We are not saying that penance is not true penance if it falls short of St. Adamnan's, or that it must needs take the peculiar shape of his austerities. There are ordinary Christians who serve God acceptably without being called to the eminences of the saints. Penance may be true penance, and yet have none of that "heroicity" in it which the promoter of the faith would demand if canonisation were claimed for the penitent. It is the substantial, real, vigorous doctrine implied in such a penance, illustrated, embodied, and expounded by it, which we would fain recall. If men would only learn to humble themselves by confession, faith in the ecclesiastical absolutions would grow in them as a matter of course, and the moral effects of confession on their own characters would be found more momentous than they could have conceived beforehand.

For how many years St. Adamnan led this austere life we are not told, nor how long he was an inmate of the cells of Coldingham. But St. Bede says that it was for a long time. Now it happened after this long time that Adamnan and another monk had to make a journey, possibly on some business connected with the monastery. Their business finished, they returned to Coldingham. At some distance the noble abbey with its towers and tall

roofs and manifold pile came into view, and at the sight of the lofty buildings Adamnan began to weep bitterly; for we read of him before this that God had endowed him with the gift of tears, in all ages so characteristic of the saints. His companion naturally demanded why a prospect, which should cheer him, on the contrary made him weep. "The time comes," replied Adamnan, "when a devouring fire shall destroy all these buildings which you see, both private and public." Probably Adamnan's reputation for sanctity was such that his words did not fall lightly to the ground among his brethren at Coldingham. At any rate his companion on this occasion seems to have questioned him no further, but as soon as they arrived at the monastery he related them to St. Ebba the abbess.

St. Ebba was greatly troubled within herself at this disquieting relation; she sent for Adamnan, and questioned him strictly as to the meaning of his words. The holy monk replied as follows: "Not long since, while I was spending the night in watching and psalmody, suddenly I saw a person whom I did not know standing by me; when I was, as it were, terrified by his presence, he told me not to fear, and, speaking to me in a familiar tone, he said, 'You do well in not spending in sleep this quiet time of night, but in being instant in watches and prayers.' I answered him that I had much need to be instant in salutary watches that I might sedulously deprecate the Divine anger for my wanderings. He added, 'What you say is true; you and many have need to redeem your sins by good works, and when they cease from the labours of

temporal things, then to toil the more readily through the appetite of eternal goods; but very few indeed do so: I have but now visited and examined the whole monastery in order, I have inspected the cells and the beds, and I have found none out of the whole number except yourself occupied about the health of his soul; but all, men and women alike, are either slothfully asleep in bed, or watch in order to sin. Nay, the very cells that were built for praying or reading are now turned into resorts for eating, drinking, talking, and other enticements. The virgins, too, dedicated to God, put off the reverence of their profession, and, whenever they have time, take pains in weaving fine robes, either to adorn themselves as brides, to the great peril of their monastic state, or to win the admiration of strangers. Wherefore a heavy vengeance of savage fire is deservedly prepared for this place and the inhabiters of it.'"

Such was Adamnan's tale; and no doubt it sounded very dreadful to the ears of the holy abbess. "Why did you not tell me of it sooner?" she demanded. To this the monk humbly replied, "I was afraid, because of my reverence for you, as I thought you would be excessively disturbed by it; and yet you may have this consolation, that the plague will not come in your days."

The seventh century was not an age of sneering, natural as that facile sin is to all ages. When Adamnan's communication with St. Ebba was known throughout the monastery fear came upon all; austerity, penance, self-chastisement, prayer, fast and vigil, became the order of the day, and

doubtless many thought and read of Nineveh. This, however, was not of long continuance, and it seems in a measure to have been kept up by the example and authority of the abbess; for we are told that after her death things relapsed into their old corrupt state, and the monks grew more and more wicked. An interval of security had elapsed, and probably Adamnan's prophecy had come to be disbelieved. However, while the monks of Coldingham were crying peace the destruction came. The monastery was reduced to ashes in 686, and it is said, on what authority does not appear, first that Adamnan survived the burning of Coldingham three years, dying in 689; and secondly, that it was in consequence of the degeneracy of Coldingham, which he attributed to its being a double monastery of monks and nuns, that St. Cuthbert made his stringent laws against women so much as coming to hear mass in the church where his monks celebrated. This is hardly likely, for, although St. Cuthbert was distinguished by an unusual jealousy on this point, a reference to the table of penances in St. Columban's Rule will show that he was only carrying out what he had been accustomed to at Melrose and had been derived from Iona. This account of St. Adamnan's vision was told to St. Bede by Edgils, a priest who, leaving Coldingham at the fire, took up his abode in the monastery of Wearmouth, and whom St. Bede describes as his most reverend brother priest. The Divine judgments are indeed mercies. Though at times God seems to cover Himself with a cloud that our prayer should not pass through, yet His compassions are new

every morning. The storm broke over Coldingham, but it cleared away. When the wild Danes came, St. Ebba's monastery was still a living mother of saints, and Adamnan the penitent, the prophet, unforgotten.

THE LIFE OF

ST. BEGA

VIRGIN AND ABBESS, A.D. 650

ANY one climbing the brow of Hawcoat immediately to the west of Furness Abbey, and seating himself at the foot of the modern tower where the monks' chair originally was, may see one of the most magnificent views in the north of England. And if the chair of the good Camaldolese above Naples commands a prospect more beautiful, though less extensive, the view from Hawcoat will be at least more interesting to an English Catholic. He is sitting on the west side of the peninsula of Furness. At his feet, supposing the tide to be high, is the estuary of the Duddon, running up into the mountains till the silver gleam of the waters is lost in a purple gorge. Before him the sun is setting over the Scotch hills beyond the Solway, and through the bright haze the peaks of the Isle of Man are flushed with a deep gold. On his right are the mountains which embrace within their many arms the English lakes; the blue sea studded with white sails is on his left in front; and round the base of the shadowy Black

Combe he perceives a region, comparatively flat, intervening between the roots of the mountains and the ever-foamy line of the Atlantic. It is watered by the Mite, the Irt, and the Esk, uniting in the sandlocked pool of Ravenglass, and is striped brilliantly with yellow corn-fields and ruddy fallows, up to the very headland of St. Bees.

Such was the view which the old monks of Furness loved, and to which they came through the woody path, having erected a stone chair for the tranquil enjoyment of the scene. But Furness is a ruin, where the simple-mannered Cistercians served God, and so are the aisles of the woody Calder. Still the name of Copeland Forest belongs to the region, still the uncertain legend of St. Bega hangs like a mist over the place, and still upon her holy headland is a school for Christian doctrine. The desolation of modern change has not quite trodden out all the footsteps of the Catholic past.

We have now to tell the legend of St. Bees, so far as it may be told, so far as history can take cognisance of it. There seems to have been more than one St. Bega; for if, as Alford thinks, St. Heyne, the first nun in Northumberland, and who received the veil from St. Aidan, is the same with St. Bega, then she can hardly be the Bega who succeeded St. Hilda at Hacanos, for that St. Bega died a hundred years after St. Aidan, and yet she is gènerally taken to be the same. Mabillon makes her to die at Hacanos, Alban Butler at Calcaria, supposed to be Tadcaster. It seems next to impossible to reconcile the chronology or conflicting statements which have come down to us, and it

is therefore but right to advertise the reader that the following pages can make no claim to historical accuracy. They follow for the most part the monkish legend printed from the Cottonian MSS. (Faust. B. 4, fol. 122–139) among the Carlisle tracts; and at any rate put the reader in possession of what St. Bega's own monks believed about their holy foundress some centuries later than her own time. The devotion to her was very great through the north of England; she is connected with both the western and eastern coasts, and her headland is still crowned with a religious college called after her name; so that it is interesting at any rate to know what the monks had collected about her from the three sources which the life specifies, chronicles, authentic histories, and the tradition of trustworthy people. The monk compiled his biography for the edification of the sons of the Church; the same end may hold good still; and it should be remembered that if we cannot prove our facts by the usual historical evidence, neither is there anything to throw discredit upon them. The only doubt is whether we are not relating the acts of two saints in the life of one.

Bega was the daughter of an Irish king, possibly Donald the Third, possessed of great and widely spread influence in the early part of the seventh century. He was a Christian, and an earnest man to boot, and Bega was baptized as an infant, and taught in her tender years the mysteries of the faith. In very childhood God inspired her with an ardent love of holy virginity, and she seems to have been almost preserved from the pollution of impure

thoughts. As a girl she avoided all public amusements, and, fearing lest idleness should prove a source of sin, she was studious to fill up the whole of her time with some employment. A weary spirit she knew to be the sleep of the soul, and praying with the psalmist, "Dormitavit anima mea præ tædio, confirma me in verbis Tuis," she devoted a large portion of her time to the study of holy books; and when her mind required relaxation she worked gold fringes, and was singularly skilful in a method of interweaving gold and jewels. While others were engaged in the pursuits and recreations of youth, she was to be found making decorations for the church; for as yet the worship of domestic comfort was unknown, and the broidery frame was filled with costly silks and metal threads, not for the furniture of a palace, but as frontals for the altar, or other holy purposes. If time be of all talents one of the most fearful committed to our charge, and it be still true that the righteous are scarcely saved, what are we to think of a state of things when the young females of a country should spend more than a third of their time in multiplying by frivolous industry the gay and costly adornments of private ease and luxury? It was not so with Bega. She was busy with her embroidery and her golden fringe; but it was for the worship of God. And, therefore, instead of dissipation of mind, visible in levity of conversation, she learned in her work how to have a spirit self-recollected, an aptitude for mental prayer, a carefulness of speech, and a virginal modesty which won the hearts of all who approached her.

Such was she in her girlhood; but riper age brought fresh cares upon her. She was eminent for her beauty, and that is a fearful gift in a king's court. Offers of marriage poured in upon her from Irish and foreign princes; the suitors sent her magnificent presents, bracelets, and ear-rings, and cloth of gold, and rings studded with precious stones. But all these things she counted as loss for the love of Christ, and its surpassing excellency. True it is, that as a princess she was ofttimes obliged to go about in robes adorned with gold, yet it was a self-denial to her, a mortification rather than a thing she prized, for notwithstanding this outward seeming of regal pomp, the glory of the king's daughter was all within. Her thoughts were ever running upon the excellences of a monastic life; to be a nun was more after her heart than to be a queen, for that sweet truth was never out of her mind that the angels neither marry nor are given in marriage; and she would fain be as they, if so be it would please God to give her the peerless gift, and who that heartily covets it is not assisted thereto? "O quam pulchra est casta generatio cum claritate! immortalis enim est memoria illius: quoniam apud Deum nota est et apud homines."

This panting after holy virginity, for which many of the saints have been so conspicuous almost from their cradles, seems unreal to the children of the world. Of course it does: they cannot even put themselves for a moment in the position of those who so feel. It would require a transposing of all their affections quite out of the question in their case, even in imagination, a new nomencla-

ture both for things earthly and things heavenly, a new measure and a new balance, which even they who fall and by God's grace rise again do but handle clumsily for a long while. How do all graces seem even to such penitents as nothing, because they can never attain that one so fair, so bright, so beautiful! What is there in penance so productive of humility as the keen rankling thought that the virgin's crown is lost? And if they are blessed who so learn to humble and to afflict themselves, if they are blessed who are the least in the Kingdom of Heaven, is it too much to kneel with lowliest veneration and a supplicating spirit before the altars of the virgin saints, where God is honoured in His servants, praying Him to quicken their prevailing prayers that we may have nerve to bring our penance to a safe issue, and so attain unto our rest?

The case being so with the most sweet gift of virginity, Bega, says her biographer in his touching way,[1] "studied to hear the bleating of the heavenly Lamb, with the ear of hearing; and to weave herself a nuptial robe from Its fleece, that she might be able to go forth to Its nuptials, like a bride ornamented with her jewels, to see her Betrothed decorated with a crown, and to be clothed by Him with the garment of salvation, and that she might deserve to be surrounded by the robe of eternal gladness. Despising thus all the allurements of this impure world, its vanities and false delusions, the venerable virgin, offering up her virginity one

[1] Mr. Tomlinson's Trans. in the Carlisle Tracts, p. 4.

day to God, bound herself by a vow that she would not contract nor experience the bands of marriage with any one, by her own will, that[1] not knowing the marriage-bed in sin she might have fruit in respect of holy souls."

While she was meditating upon this vow of chastity, which possibly she had not made formally, a person suddenly stood before her, of an agreeable aspect and reverendly clothed. Whether it was one of the blessed angels, or one of the departed saints, or some holy man to whom the secrets of her mind had been revealed, we are not told. He seemed to know all that was passing in her thoughts, and admonished her to keep the laudable vow of chastity. And before leaving her he gave her a bracelet with a cross graved upon it, saying, "Receive this blessed gift sent to you by the Lord God, by which you may know that you are for His service, and that He is your Spouse. Place it, therefore, as a sign upon your heart and upon your arm, that you may admit no one else beside Him." When he had uttered these words he disappeared, leaving the holy virgin overwhelmed with spiritual consolation. Indeed, she needed now more than ordinary strength in order to overcome the world and carry out her brave and godly purpose.

From what follows we must suppose either that the Irish king, her father, had fallen off from his first fervour in the faith, or that the monkish historian has at the outset somewhat exaggerated his submission to the Divine law. It fell out that the

[1] This is the third antiphon in the Commune Virginum.

fame of her beauty and maidenly bearing was carried as far as to the court of Norway. The report of her virtues, together with the power and wealth of her father, induced the prince, the heir to the throne, to desire her for his bride. Whereupon he sent some ambassadors into Ireland, whose first duty was to see and judge whether the beauty and acquirements of the princess came at all near to what was reported of her, and, if it were so, then to ask her in marriage from her father. The ambassadors found that, so far from having exaggerated, fame had even fallen short of the loveliness and grace of Bega; and without any further scruple they demanded her in marriage for the heir of Norway. Her father, having already sufficient alliances among the Irish chieftains, was ambitious to extend his influence beyond the seas, and he lent a willing, nay, even a greedy ear to the proposals of the Norwegian ambassadors. He sent them to their own country loaded with presents, and with a message to the prince that if he would come himself into Ireland and espouse his daughter, he would give her honourably to him: for that it was not dignified or safe to send a young damsel of such high birth and quality into a distant land under other escort than that of her husband.

The Norwegian prince admitted the justice and propriety of the Irish king's demand. The matter was debated in the council of his father, and it was determined that the prince should sail for Ireland and espouse the lovely Bega. The winds were fair and the seas calm, and in a short time the prince and his train set foot upon the Irish shores. On

the day of their landing, the king gave them a magnificent reception, and a sumptuous banquet; and, as it was now eventide, it was unanimously agreed to defer all mention of the business on which they had come till the morrow. Then followed a scene of wassail and of riot, such as have been too characteristic of the free and ungrudging hospitality of the Irish; but which ill accords with our notions of a king given up to the Divine law. It appears that when the night was far advanced the feast was over, and the sober and the drunken locked in deep sleep.

But the holy Bega—she was no stranger to all that was going on about her. Alas! she knew too well the purport of the prince's visit; she knew the ambition of her father; she knew that to all appearance the secret wish of her heart, her holy covetousness, was not to be satisfied. As her biographer says, she was exceedingly troubled within herself, fearing and imagining that the lily of her secluded garden was about to be immediately plucked and defiled, and that her precious treasure, preserved with great care and much labour in an earthen vessel, yea, if I may so say, in a vase of glass, was about to be snatched away.

Indeed, her case seemed desperate; the palace gates were locked; there were sentries at all the avenues leading to it; the watchmen trod heavily and regularly, all were wide awake, as though the evening's debauch rendered double vigilance necessary. The bravest men in Ireland were on their accustomed guard round the bedside of the king, and in all the passages of his dwelling, with a

dagger on their thighs, a battle-axe on their shoulders, and a javelin in their hands. And if she could have penetrated beyond the palace, what then? Where should she lie hid? She knew her father's temper; he would drag her from the very altars of a convent if she took refuge there. Besides he had passed his royal word to the Norwegian prince, and even a parent is ruthless where honour is at stake. She knew what the keeping of a royal word had once done, when he who gave it was ashamed to break it before the chief estates of Galilee. There was but one solitary means of escape to which Bega could betake herself; it was to prayer, the prayer of faith. She mourned in her prayer and was vexed; the enemy cried so, and the ungodly came on so fast. She mourned in her prayer, for Satan already rejoiced at his approaching victory; she mourned for the dove's wing, and marvellously was the dove's wing given to her.

The time of night is described as being that when drowsiness comes strongest upon men who are keeping vigils. But Bega had no temptation to drowsiness, for her spirit was galled and vexed. She poured out her heart like water, offering up her prayer with the choice offering of holy tears; and she said, "O Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and of the Virgin, the author and lover, inspirer and consecrator, preserver and crowner of virginity, as Thou knowest how, as it pleaseth Thee, and as Thou art able to do, preserve in me untouched the resolution I have taken, that I may dedicate it to Thee in the heart, and in the flesh of integrity. For Thou, author of nature, didst, in the time of the

natural law, bedeck Thy shepherd Abel with a double wreath, namely, of virginity and of martyrdom; Thou, under the written law, didst snatch away to the heavens, Elijah, clothed in the whiteness of integrity; Thou didst send before Thee, Thy Baptist and precursor John, ignorant of stain, and of snowy chastity. Thou also didst set forth the main hope of the world, our Lady, as a most beautiful and special mirror for grace and honour among virgins, out of whose womb, taking upon Thyself the failings of our nature, like a bridegroom going forth from his nuptial couch, Thou didst appear a Saviour to the world. Thou also, calling Thy beloved John from the nuptials to the wedding feast of the Lamb, hast preserved him for ever, blooming in the unfading flower of virginity, and hast delivered to him to be guarded, the box of Thy ointments, the propitiation of human reconciliation. Thou hast crowned Agnes, Agatha, Lucia and Catherine, and very many others wrestling in the faith of Thy name for their chastity, and hast magnified Thy blessed name by these triumphant signs. Therefore, I pray, by the grace of these, that I, Thine handmaid, may find favour in Thine eyes, that Thou mayest be a helper to me in what I ought to do in my trouble; that Thou being my Benefactor, Leader, Ruler, and Protector, I may render to Thee the vow which my lips have pronounced."[1]

Thus she prayed, and sorrowed deeply; for her father was an austere man, and of an inflexible will, and she knew it was hopeless to attempt to divert

[1] Mr. Tomlinson's Trans. pp. 8, 9, 10.

him from his purpose. But if Satan rejoiced in the prospect of frustrating a pure and holy resolution so fatal to his kingdom, the heavenly angels were only the more intent upon the custody of this precious flower in the garden of their Lord. In the deep stillness of the night, when her prayer was concluded, there came a sounding Voice, which said, "Fear not, Bega, most beloved friend; thy prayer is heard. Hearken, O daughter, consider and incline thine ear. Forget also thine own people and thy father's house. Thou shalt have a house not made with hands, now prepared for thee in heaven. It behoveth thee, then, to go from kingdom to kingdom, from thy people to another people, from land to land, from Ireland to Britain, which is called England, and there thy days being ended in good, I will take thee into the fellowship of angels. Arise, therefore, and take the bracelet by which thou art pledged to Me, and descending to the sea, thou shalt find a ship ready prepared, which will transport thee into Britain."

The virgin rose: her sorrows were past, the rain of her tears was over and gone, for the voice of her turtle had sounded in the land. She thought not of the difficulties, but in the energy of faith she rose and descended. A deep unnatural slumber oppressed the guards, as though they too had been revellers. At the touch of the mysterious bracelet the portals flew open, till the virgin stood free in the cold and refreshing air. The seaside was soon gained; the ship was there, and she was received on board without hesitation or objection. Every step was smoothed by miracles; for she had the

faith of Abraham, meriting to be called as Abraham was called, and strengthened to obey the call; for she left her father's house, and went out not knowing whither, except that God was everywhere. The tender maiden was a true daughter of Sarah, for overwhelming as was the darkness of her prospects and her Divine visitation past belief, yet she was not afraid with any amazement.

Now let us pause upon this act of Bega. It is worth while to examine it, even though it cause us to digress. Of course one would deprecate anything like an apologetic tone or a patronising explanation when speaking of the blessed saints whom the Catholic Church holds up to our affectionate reverence. Yet when men have departed so far from Catholic principles that they have to learn them again painfully, syllable by syllable, as though it were a foreign language, it is obvious that they are wholly incompetent in a great number of instances to understand, much less set a value upon, the deeds of our Catholic ancestors. One great object in writing the lives of the saints is to recall, so far as may be, the old Catholic temper, to have the old weights and measures of Catholic morality recognised as standards. It will not, therefore, be out of place, though it seems a cold interruption of a religious narrative, to say something on the propriety of this act of St. Bega.

She fled by night from her father's house to avoid a marriage to which his word was pledged: she consulted neither priest nor kindred: she went she knew not where, imprudently, the world would say, and under the influence of a heated imagina-

tion: and the very first step of this extraordinary line of conduct was to entrust herself, a helpless virgin, to the company of rude mariners, who must obviously have been ignorant of her rank. This is one way of stating the facts; and admitting her to have been sincerely conscientious, was she not neglecting a plain duty? Was it not an offence against natural piety? Was it not, at best, seeking after what is only a counsel of perfection through a manifest breach of an actual commandment? Was it not doing evil that good might come? Now let it be premised that no one pretends to say that all the heroic actions of the saints are imitable by us: this is a caution which cannot be too frequently repeated; one of the greatest illusions of the devil is to persuade unformed penitents to attempt single actions of the saints. For, first of all, what was with them the general result of their whole conduct, or a harmonious part of a consistent conduct, may be with us an irregular, disconnected act, and therefore something totally different from what it was in them: and again, we cannot tell in their case how far they were inspired, in what singular ways they were impressed or with what degree of clearness the Holy Spirit vouchsafed to make His Will known to them. Admitting then that the actions of the saints are not always imitable, we would contend that Bega was justified in this act of flying from her father's house to fulfil her vow of virginity; and as the objection which may be raised against this single act will apply to the whole monastic system and the teaching of monastic

writers, it may be worth while to say a little more about it.

There are two things concerning a holy life, the neglect or adoption of which must entirely change the character of a man's religion, and however little connected they may seem when first stated, they are in reality closely bound together, the one leading to, strengthening, sustaining, and perfecting the other. They are Confession, and the practice of Election, both as to the general state of life which it is expedient for us to lead, and also as to the management of particular occurrences with which we have to deal. If Confession is disused, the inward life of the soul loses what may be called its sacramental character; everything is displaced, cause and effect disjoined and transposed; and the medicines of penance taken at random are converted into the poison of self-will. The practice of electing one rather than another line of life or conduct, and making that election a solemn ritual act, under the spiritual guidance of another, and according to systematic rules, has for one of its chief results a strict conscientiousness in the details of everyday duty, and is closely connected with the grace of final perseverance according to the text, "Cor ingrediens duas vias non habebit successus." Now it is here that Confession and Election are so intimately united; for it is clear that conscientiousness in details is equally the moral result of doing everything as knowing it will have to be honestly and with much shame revealed to another. Indeed, the very nature of sacramental Confession is of itself calculated to bring about such a conscientious-

ness, as being an awful, though mercifully permitted, anticipation and rehearsal of the last judgment. Although, as Suarez says, secular persons remaining in the world may find the greatest benefit from Election, for it prepares them for temptations and the surprises of sin, and is also a remedy to be administered to those who have been great sinners,[1] yet it is obvious that it is an indispensable duty when they come to decide such questions as whether they shall marry, or go into holy orders, or enter a monastery.

St. Ignatius in his Spiritual Exercises notes two ways in which a general or particular Election may be made; one by an impartial deliberation with prayer and a weighing of and reasoning upon the opposite views of the question; another when the mind is clearly and unmistakably impressed from above with the conviction that it ought to make such a choice. The latter is of course supernatural, and is unlikely to occur to one not in the habit of timidly and sensitively looking out for God's Will in every matter, great or small, and being tranquil and indifferent as to the consequences which the choice may bring upon one's self. Such was the kind of Election in which for the most part those vows of virginity, so frequent in the lives of the saints, took their rise. So at the very outset any measures taken because of them are not to be judged as acts of the saint's own will, or private deliberation, or original bent of mind: and this must alter our way of looking at them very materi-

[1] Of what importance then to us in our present state!

ally. We live in times when men are apt *first* to choose, and *then* (speaking even of good men) in the *second* place to see what they can make of their own choice so as to glorify God, to edify His Church, and save their souls. The Saints began with a quiet and total indifferency to all ways and states of life, sought *first* how they with their turn of mind could glorify God, and then simply chose upon that investigation, embracing their state of life with the quiet ardour of self-renunciation. Now the first line of conduct is so sadly below the last that they who pursue the one can hardly, even by a mental effort, be competent judges of what they did who embraced the other. This is very much to be remembered.

The question at issue is thus, and equitably, put upon very different grounds : it is taken to a higher and more competent court. Supposing then a Saint to have a vocation brought before him by a supernatural impression, vision or voice, and by applying to this impression the usual tests for discerning spirits, to find it no illusion of Satan, but really from God, surely all other duties are immediately superseded, in the same *way* (we do not speak of *degree*) that they were in the Old Testament times when God's will was distinctly revealed about any matter. Still it is not, so to speak, a new revelation, but a special guidance given to an individual respecting the application to his own case of rules already given. The case before us, for instance, is the desertion of parents : we read in Scripture such passages as these, "Qui non *odit* patrem suum et matrem, fratres et sorores, adhuc autem et animam

suam, non potest Meus esse discipulus. Sine ut mortui sepeliant mortuos suos. Qui dixerunt patri suo, et matri suæ, Nescio vos; et fratribus suis, Ignoro vos; et nescierunt filios suos, hi custodierunt eloquium Tuum, et pactum Tuum servaverunt." [1] Consistently with this, great writers have taught that in the election of our state God's vocation, conscientiously ascertained so far as we can, is to supersede the claims even of our parents to control our choice. "Ab hoc concilio amovendi sunt carnis propinqui," says St. Thomas.[2] Their view was some such as this,—God is the God of order, and as the Church is so far as possible a copy of Heaven, it is instinct with the highest and most beautiful order, which can only be preserved by a renunciation of self-will, and an election of a state of life, for every member of the body not obeying his special vocation is a dislocated limb, useless himself, and impeding and encumbering the functions of the members near him. Acting upon this view, such men as SS. Thomas Aquinas, Peter of Alcantara, Francis Xavier, Louis Bertrandi, and others, embraced the monastic life without so much as communicating their design to their parents. Neither was this a view of late ages only: it seems to follow necessarily upon a belief that the apostolic life may be and ought to have been lived in the Church in all ages. Cassian relates of Apollonius a story which shows how natural the "Sine ut mortui

[1] St. Luke xiv. 26, ix. 60; Deut. xxxiii. 9.

[2] The whole of this matter is discussed by St. Thomas in the Secunda Secundæ, quæst. 186-189. Also by Rodriguez, 2, v. 7; and by St. Alphonso, Practica di amar. cap. xi.

sepeliant mortuos suos" came to the old saints of Egypt. The brother of that great abbot, knocking at his cell door, importuned him to come and render him assistance in trouble. The abbot demanded why he came to him rather than to his other brother, who was a secular person: the reply was that the other brother had (the abbot not knowing it) been dead fifteen years; and I, rejoined the abbot, have been dead twenty, for so long is it since I interred myself in this cell.

This digression may perhaps be forgiven as suggesting the thought whether it is wiser to assume the reasoning of our own times as a premiss, and judge the Saints accordingly, rather than to try, though the effort be humbling at first, to enter into the principles which led to their actions, with a view not only of judging *them* correctly, but of judging ourselves by them. Alas! they who nowadays study in the lives of the saints are travellers in a foreign country; there is neither profit nor pleasure till the first irksomeness of a new language and strange manners is worn off. Yet we speak of them as though they were altogether such persons as ourselves.

But to return. We left the Irish princess embarking on a strange ship, leaving rank, luxury, home, kindred, all things, for her exceeding love of holy virginity. One who so loved chaste virginity must have been a person of keen, intense affections, and doubtless felt as few can feel towards those she left behind. But she might remember, perhaps, how the heavenly Spouse of virgin souls had left His Mother at the age of twelve, without a farewell,

and kept her sorrowing three long days; and how the first time He preached the Gospel it was at a marriage feast, and in roughly sounding words to His blessed Mother; and so St. Bega might take heart. For the Lord allowed not the plea of those who would first go and bid them farewell that are at home before they followed Him. St. Cyril[1] says of the man who promised to follow Christ if he might bid his kindred farewell, "This promise is worthy of our admiration and full of all praise, but to bid farewell to those who are at home, to get leave from them, shows that he was still somehow divided from the Lord, in that he had not yet resolved to make his venture with his whole heart. For to wish to consult relations, who would not agree to his proposal, betokens one somewhat wavering. Wherefore, our Lord condemns this, saying, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God. He puts his hand to the plough who is ambitious to follow, yet looks back again when he seeks an excuse for delay in returning home, and consulting with his friends." But Bega made her venture with a whole heart. Great and dazzling was all that she left behind, but greater still and brighter the prize of holy virginity after which she pressed through the dreary prospect before her.

The Irish seas are not often calm; and Bega's voyage seems to have been attended with considerable danger. The voyage was prosperous and the

[1] Cat. Aur. in loc. Oxf. Tr.

wind favourable till they neared the English shore, that part of the Cumberland coast which went by the name of Copeland; there, whether from the violence of the storm or clumsy piloting, the vessel was almost lost among the rocks which lay round a jutting headland. Bega, it is said, made a vow that if she was preserved she would build a holy house upon that headland, where still stands to this day the college of St. Bees. She did land in safety, and the memorial of her vow still lives upon that beautiful shore, and the house upon her headland is one of the fountains which supply with clergy the northern shires of England.

Bega's first business, after disembarkation, was to examine the surrounding country. It was covered with dusky, tangled wood, running down even to the sea-coast, as may still be seen in some places where the trees, from the continual action of the fierce west winds and the splashing of the salt spray, throw out their half-leaved branches to the east, and look as if they had been cut in a stiff form by artificial means. The country too was thinly peopled, and the presence of the solemn-sounding sea, and the silence of the umbrageous woods, rendered it a fit place wherein to dedicate a solitary life to God. There she constructed a cell, or, as others think, adapted a seaside cave for her hermitage. "There," says her biographer, "she passed many years in the struggle of most strict conversation, labouring a long time for the Lord. Therefore she sat in solitude, and raising herself above herself, she had leisure, and saw how the Lord himself is God, tasting frequently how

pleasant and sweet He is to all who hope in Him."

Daily, rising above the level of the green tree tops, she saw the purple peaks and ridges; beyond those beautiful mountains St. Oswald was ruling in sanctity and peace, and St. Aidan making his episcopal visitations on foot, entering the scattered farms, teaching the little children, and leaving heavenly peace behind him whithersoever he went. The king in his bright crown, the weary foot-sore bishop,—each in their way are doing the work of God, and spreading the Redeemer's kingdom. And Bega too, beyond the mountains,—she in her way is doing the same work. While she sings the divine praises, and her meditations are differently attuned, sometimes by the heavy thunder of the rolling sea, sometimes by the scarcely whispering winds or deep voices of the wood-pigeons in the trees, she is spreading the Redeemer's kingdom. Her prayers, her intercessions, her acts of austerity, her self-imposed loneliness, her virginal sacrifice, are communicating secret vigour to the whole Church, and have power in the invisible world to bring out gifts for her fellow-men. For to love God is the first commandment, and activity for our neighbours, without the love of God, is not the keeping of the second.

But Bega's life in Copeland forest was not wholly in her Psalter. Tradition assigns her other occupations.[1] She was skilled in the knowledge of medicinal plants, and applied her knowledge to relieve the ailments of the few poor who then

[1] Mr. Tomlinson's Tract, p. 12. These traditions are not noticed in the Cottonian MS., of which Mr. T.'s tract is mostly a translation.

inhabited that woody region. She perhaps was the first on that coast who gathered the rosy carrageen, and bleached it white, as a sovereign recipe for many ills, well known at this day among the cottagers of Furness, who go forth to gather it, or send their little children, when a rough sea and a west wind have strewed it on the beach. It was said too that she lived in supernatural familiarity with the creatures, the sea-birds and the wolves, and that they in part supplied her with her food. How touching is the communion with nature which has always characterised the Saints! As in the Holy Scriptures we read of beasts and birds commissioned to fulfil the office of angels in ministering to the heirs of salvation, so in the records of the Church we find the same things occurring to the Saints. If the lions reverenced the virgin Daniel, they showed a like veneration for the Christian martyrs in the bloody amphitheatres. A savage bear licked the wounds of St. Andronicus, a lioness crouched at the feet of St. Tarachus, a raven defended the unburied body of St. Vincent. St. Martin commanded the serpents and they obeyed him, St. Anthony of Padua called on the fishes to come to his preaching when the heretics despised it, and St. Francis, above all, lived in closest communion with the inferior animals. The swallows of Alviano, the water-bird of Rieti, the pheasant of Sienna, the wolf of Gubbio, the falcon of Laverna—there are strange and sweet records how all these did homage to the blessed St. Francis. Neither are such things as these merely the legends of late superstitious ages. The lives of the Egyptian

fathers are full of such things; St. Athanasius records them of St. Antony; and early in the fourth century St. Macrina, the grandmother of the great Basil, taking refuge with her husband in the forests of Pontus during persecution, was miraculously fed by stags, and St. Gregory Nazianzen has recorded the miracle. And the patterns of all these things are in the Scripture histories. This is one of the ways in which from time to time sanctity is permitted to retrieve portions of that state in which man was in Eden, and surely such records may be a great consolation to us of weak faith as showing that the manner of life the world speaks against, of self-denial, solitude, voluntary discomfort, fast, vigil, and virginity, is in reality that life wherein we are truly working our way back to the Eden whence we have wandered, as well as imitating Him whose merciful assumption of our nature pledges to us at the last even more than the Eden we have lost. Such miracles are not merely interesting, romantic, poetical, but they solemnly attest the power and heavenliness of that system of Catholic morals, so often stigmatised as degrading, servile, and superstitious; and it is as attestations of this that we should keep them in view, and bring them into notice. It is in vain for any criticism to make an impression upon the number, the prevalence in all countries and in all ages, and the authentic records of these legends: and how then shall we gainsay that system under which such miracles took place, such miracles as Scripture had already given us patterns of, such miracles as both for greatness and for number our blessed Lord Himself

taught us to expect after He was ascended up on high?

Did the homeless Bega begin to make her seaside cave a home? Did something like a local affection steal upon her, and tell her how hard it was to be wholly detached from the creatures, and that there was a poetry in a holy life which might come to be sought for its own sake, and so do a mischief? Or did God please to try His servant further, because she had strength to bear it? However this may be, her long residence in the solitudes of Copeland came to an end. She had been called away from her father's house, and now she was to leave the cave and woods so dear to her. Probably through the envy of the devil, angry at being worsted in his strife with a weak and lonely woman, the shores of Copeland became infested by pirates. These were wild beasts with whom no communion could be held. True it was she had nothing of riches to tempt them, nothing bright or fair but the miraculous bracelet of her spiritual espousals. But her treasure was her chastity; and so disquieted was the holy virgin by the presence of these terrible marauders, that she consulted God, and was commanded by revelation to fly from the place; an injunction which she seems to have obeyed with such promptitude that she left behind the bracelet she so much prized. This fearful alarm which invaded the quietness of her beloved hermitage, the hardship of this new exile, were to Bega but fresh proofs of the love of her heavenly Spouse, drawing her more closely to Himself, and making her realise still further that life is but a pilgrimage to Him,

through which His justifications were to be the subject of her songs. Of the wicked it is said that their houses are safe from fear, and that the rod of God is not upon them : but the Saints have another heritage than this.

Bega turned her footsteps eastward. By what path she crossed the mountains, or whether she skirted them by the lowlands lying between the Solway and the hills, and so entered Northumberland by the romantic valleys of the Tyne, we are not told. Probably while she tended some of the sick poor she had heard of Oswald and the blessed Aidan, whose names and good deeds would doubtless reach the opposite coast, notwithstanding the thinness of the inhabitants and the infrequency of communication. To St. Aidan, however, she bent her steps. "To him," says the monk,[1] "as to the brideman of her Bridegroom, Bega the bride of Christ, drawing near, disclosed every secret of her soul, and those divine things that were wrought about her; and sought counsel from him after what manner she might draw the bands of love and obedience towards her heavenly Spouse more tightly. The man of God, then, like an excellent watchman on the walls of Jerusalem, seeing her seeking and desiring to find her beloved, struck her more deeply and wounded her with the dart of divine love, and taking off the expallium of the dress she had hitherto worn, clothed her with a new garment of salvation. For the holy bishop, according to the custom, blessed and consecrated the holy and uncorrupt virgin as the spouse of

[1] P. 13.

Christ, and new bride of the Lamb. But he put upon her head a veil for a royal diadem, and a black garment for the purple robe, before which the region of the Northumbrians had no nun, as Bede the historian testifies.[1] The Saint certainly did well in this towards her, in order that she might thereafter preserve that sanctity, under a solemn vow, which she had hitherto kept by her own deliberate resolve; and that what she had taken up to be maintained by her conduct in secret, she might now show in public, even by her outward dress. And the holy presul inflamed the virgin lamp which shone before by itself, with the breath of his holy exhortation, that it might shine more and more, and become inextinguishable before the coming of the Bridegroom, and administered to it in prayer the fire of divine love, the oil of good works, and the wick of pious devotion."

This was a great change in Bega's life. Deep as had been her peace upon the wooded shores of Copeland, she now enjoyed an inward peace which was deeper far. Self-will is apt to mingle even with the best of our deeds; it not unfrequently mars penance, heartily taken up and austerely carried through. St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi said there was more merit in bearing a sickness with conformity to God's will than in a life of self-imposed austerities, and more consolation too, for in the one case we know the will of God, and in the other we cannot tell how far we may be self-willed: and if ever she saw any of the novices, of whom she was

[1] *i.e.* on the supposition that Bega is identical with Heru. Bede, iv. 23.

mistress, acquiring a love of prayer and seeming to prefer it to obedience and the external offices of the convent, she was accustomed to load them with external offices beyond any others, in order to mortify that dangerous self-will which was growing up even with the love of prayer. There is no doubt then that Bega was now in a much more advantageous position. She was not left to regulate herself, to choose austerities and to take upon herself the responsibility of a religious life. St. Aidan was her bishop, and obedience to him was clearly the will of God. No sooner was she clothed in her black dress than she entered a haven of peace : she was like a pilot resigning the helm to another now that the mouth of the harbour is gained. For obedience is like Eden, a place, if not of carelessness, yet of childlike security.

Surely that solitary virgin, of royal blood, with her veiled head and long black robe, must have been an edifying sight to the Northumbrians ; and yet a strange one too, for she was the first nun seen in the north of England ; and the very sight of her among the half-taught people must have been as impressive as one of St. Aidan's sermons. The first nun was she in those goodly shires so soon to be peopled with the spiritual children of St. Hilda. If it be correct that her first nunnery was somewhere on the northern bank of the Wear, she did not stay long there, and perhaps did not make any establishment. We must follow her elsewhere.

In the beautiful bay of the Tees, when the sun goes down behind the inland village of Hart, a golden splendour lights up the northern promontory

of that crescent of bright waters. Less bold than the shadowy cliffs of Yorkshire where the Cleveland hills run down into the sea, there is something singularly striking in the Durham promontory, running far out into the waves which make almost incessant thunder among the fretted arches which the tide has scooped out for itself. The town of Hartlepool does not stand at quite the extremity of the cape, but a space of green turf intervenes, without a tree, between the sea and the church of St. Hilda, whose low massy tower with its flying buttresses may be seen far off. This peninsula, or island as it was of old, went by the name of Heortheu or Hertesie, that is, the island of stags. And this was the gift which Bega received from St. Oswald. At that time probably the coast was covered with dense forests, and trees grew where the sea is now master. Any one walking from Seaton Carew to Hartlepool at low tide may perceive that the beach for a great distance is composed of the roots of trees, and possibly the swampy shallow, which, before the new harbour was completed, rendered the approach to Hartlepool so wearisomely circuitous at high tide, may have reached to the sea northward as well as southward, and presenting no barrier to the stags may yet have stayed the hunter, and so rendered that woody cape a favourite haunt with those animals. But there came one now to that secluded promontory whose feet had been nimble as harts' feet to fly from the danger of the impure pirates, and whose soul longed after God even more than any hart had ever desired the safe shelter of that forest.

Behold then the blessed Bega at Hartlepool, sicut cervus ad fontes aquarum! How much there would be to remind her of her beloved Copeland! Here were no suns setting in the sea, and she who had been accustomed to see the great orb sink down in the Atlantic must now look westward towards her ancient solitude, while the sun sets over the inland ridge of Hart. But the cape of Hartlepool was no solitude. By the aid of St. Oswald, and under the counsel of St. Aidan, Bega built a monastery, not perhaps such a lordly structure as Coldingham, but still a monastery of great note. Let it be remembered that she was the first nun Northumberland had ever seen. There were worldly-wise people in those days as well as now, and a very unpractical and hopeless thing in their eyes would be the single woman in her black serge. Yet so it was—and perhaps we may learn something by it—Christians effect wonderful things when their will is hearty and single. Bega built a great monastery; she built it within as well as without; she not only raised the house, but filled it with nuns. Something was there so beautiful and convincing in the evangelical character of a nun that the new house of Hartlepool was not only thronged with world-renouncing virgins, but it was the cause of an outbreak of zeal and holy love, like the zeal of "Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam," in the days of Ezra, who proposed the putting away of strange wives; for Bega's biographer tells us that "not only many virgins were brought after her to the Heavenly King, invited and stirred up by her exhortation

and example, but also many converts, repenting of their married state and secular conversation, were offered in joy and exultation in the temple to the Divine King, and subjected to His service. So the bride of Christ, who languished for the love of her Bridegroom, ardently wished to be supported by flowers, to be surrounded by apple-trees."

They who among flowers and sweet rushes and green boughs thread the passages and mount the staircases of the Jesuits' College at Rome on the feast of St. Aloysius, and see his poor bedroom now converted into a gaily decorated chapel, and the place crowded with Roman boys thinking of him with love and honour for his wonderful chastity, feel a strange pleasure in the contrast when their eyes light upon a picture of the youthful noble performing menial offices in the college kitchen. The Irish princess affords us the same example of a humility delighting in abject places and occupations. While the nunnery of Hartlepool was building, she was too weak to labour with her hands, but she made herself the slave of the workmen. She cooked their provisions for them, carried their dinners to them so that their work might be as little interrupted as possible, and, as the monk says, she was ever ministering and running backwards and forwards, like a bee laden with honey. At length the holy house was finished, the workmen dismissed, the nuns come, and Bega become an abbess in the Church of Christ. But there was still work to be done, work in which her old skill in broidery would help her. The church was built, but there were frontals, cor-

porals, curtains, copes, chasubles, and a hundred things wanted in the way of decoration; and accordingly the whole place was full of gentle nuns, spinning, and weaving, and sewing, and copying patterns, and yet the while silent and recollected, their hearts stayed on God and occupied with the sweets of celestial meditation. For notwithstanding all this other work, and the wants and unsettledness of a new monastery, "she urged them most fervently to the keeping of fasts and watchings, to the singing of hymns and psalms, and spiritual songs, and to the study of holy reading; so that she was the admiration of the whole congregation. But among the other gifts of virtue with which the Divine Grace had endowed her, she exceeded in humility beyond the standard of nature and human habit. Thus she did Martha's work that she might not neglect Mary's holy rest, nor, on the other hand, contemn a necessary service on account of Mary's sabbath. And because she was accepted by God and man, she enlarged her monastery with possessions given by princes; to wit, first, by St. Oswald, and afterwards by St. Oswin, the future martyr."

It would have been interesting to know what kind of a rule St. Aidan gave to this first Northumbrian nunnery, how far it was his own drawing up, or how far copied from rules already existing, or how far modified by the suggestions of the blessed abbess herself. We should wish to know whether strict cloister was prescribed, or whether the nuns were occupied in works of mercy outside their walls, and whether there was any con-

ventual hospitality connected with the peculiarly safe and inviting anchorage of the bay, so greatly needed along that bleak and repulsive coast, and which one wild night so often fills with shipping even in the present days of improved navigation. However there were doubtless the offices of the Church, and mental prayer, and examinations of conscience, and humiliations in chapter, and a covetousness of chastity, and a love of Christlike poverty, and a prompt self-abasing obedience: and a blessed thing, surely a very blessed thing it was for the rough-mannered Northumbrians to have such a heaven on earth amongst them, as that community of gentle women, a beacon on the rocks of that sea-fretted promontory, whose far-off light it was very pleasant to look back upon, knowing it was the first light of the kind which had shone among the people of those various and beautiful shires of the north.

Meanwhile Christian things were growing among the Northumbrians; and greatly gladdened, no doubt, was the heart of good St. Aidan, and a cause of very unenvious joy was it to the abbess of Hartlepool. There came another holy woman into the diocese of Lindisfarne, by the bishop's invitation; and he gave her a site somewhere on the banks of the woodland Wear, with its thin streams and broad beds of gravel. Perhaps it might be close to Wearmouth, for Sunderland church was dedicated to St. Hilda, and St. Hilda was the stranger freshly come among the Northumbrians to emulate the example of Bega.

Meanwhile Bega grew a little discontented with

her position; for there are circumstances in which even saints do not fear to want resignation, or at least to do their best to effect a change, and their example in this respect is not likely to be pernicious to the world at large. What saints find it hard to submit to is a position which seems to distract them from the single thought of God and love of their heavenly Spouse. They are not backward to sacrifice the joys of secret contemplation, the raptures of prayer, the delights of the cloister, where the needs of the faith or the welfare of their neighbours call them to serve God in another way. Even Mary went out in haste when once she had ascertained her Lord's call. But when their present circumstances involve them in cares wholly or partially secular, and attach them too much to the creature when they would be entirely devoted to the service of the Creator, when the perfection which they covet seems to recede from them, holy persons have felt such a yearning after heavenly things that they have considered it an imperative duty to divest themselves of offices and responsibilities which seem to drag their souls earthwards. How inconsistent is all this! a man of the world will say; what guarantee is there that these restless saints are not after all worshipping self-will, which it is the primary object of a monk or nun to renounce? How can they be sure of it themselves? Are not these vagaries of the old abbesses just what we see among unsettled but well-meaning religious women of our own times? To this we may answer, Certainly not: for the Catholic system is a whole, and one part

succours the other, or is the complement of the other. Under it there were then, and there are to-day for such as are blessed enough to live under it, such things as discipline, superiors, obedience, confessors, spiritual directors, the obligation of vows, limited and strictly defined dispensing powers, and so forth,—very uncouth and harsh-sounding words to modern ears, menacing and despotic things which Lutheran laxity and Protestant freedom and the pewholders of popular chapels will find it very difficult to live under. Indeed the monastic system altogether is to heresy very much what an exhausted receiver would be to any luckless animal whom the cruel philanthropy of science thought it needful to imprison therein. Nuns were not the patronesses of their bishops and confessors, nor the self-appointed judges of their doctrines, nor the loquacious admirers of their sermons, but very humble, sad, downcast sort of people who never imagined they had a word to say for themselves when they received an overharsh reproof or a disagreeable order. At least good nuns, true nuns, were such as this; and perhaps enough has been said to make it clear that Bega was a very pattern of nuns.

But what was Bega's grievance? Alas! a very subtle and refined one, many people will think. However, imaginary and wilful conceit or not, what troubled Bega was this:—she *admired*, as her biographer most aptly words it, to see how when she had gone through so much to put off the world, behold! she had now put it on again very unexpectedly in the shape of a Christian

abbacy. In other words St. Bega came to think that Church preferment was only the world in sheep's clothing. Whatever comes of this doctrine, in holding which the abbess of Hartlepool has been by no means singular, she did her best to get out of the snare in a lawful way. There must be abbesses, there must be bishops, and in fact prelates of all sorts; the Church could not get on without them. It cannot be supposed but that this objection would present itself to Bega's mind; but she would probably dispose of it by a truism equally obvious, that there would always be plenty of persons, and good persons too, who would be ready to accept prelacies, and to fill them edifyingly. Yet for all that there may be higher offices in the Church than *visible* prelacies, and higher hearts to be called to them. Bega felt her dignity and power both dangerous and distressing: how was she to exercise absolute control over many nuns, who thought herself less than the least, and the chief of sinners? how was she to endure marks of homage and respect, the highest place in chapter, and a special stall in the choir, when she pined to be abject and dishonoured as Christ was? how was she, with a mother's charity, to see that the cellarer provided for the bodily necessities of her community, when she craved after the poverty of Christ? how was she to impose penances on the erring, when her whole nature shrank from it? Her self-abasement was too great, too perfect, too heavenly, to allow her to be fit to fill high places, and exercise authority. No, says her faithful monk, "she, who washed

her feet from all the dust of earthly ministration, was troubled within herself, because she thought she had as it were again defiled them under the cares of her office. For she remembered the voice of that turtle that she used to hear in her own country, that light whispering that she felt breathing in the interior of her cell, and saying, Who will give me to be as I was in former times, when God was secretly in my tabernacle, when I was intoxicated with the plenty of His House, and He gave me to drink of the torrent of His pleasure? While she frequently turned these things over in her mind, her spirit was troubled within her, because, considering how to relinquish every external business and all the ministry of Martha, and choosing Mary's best part which shall not be taken away, the renunciation of the government of the monastery which she had built, without any retractation, sat upon her mind."

Abbots and bishops seeking to lay down their crosiers and mitres to copy the humility and low estate of Christ, and popes grudging the dispensation lest the Church should suffer loss through lack of these good men's services, and the abbots and the bishops growing urgent and almost clamorous, and the popes loving them the more for their want of prompt submission in such a matter, and at length wisely dreading to interfere with a divine vocation, and reluctantly giving way —this is an edifying contest which has been many times renewed in every age of the Catholic Church. Indeed it is almost one of those few characteristics which give a tangible unity to the lives of the

Saints amid their astonishing diversity. The like contest now took place between Bega and St. Aidan. The bishop refused to give her a dispensation, or to allow her abdication. His reluctance was most natural; for though Bega in her own estimation was the chief of sinners, to others she was a manifest vessel of God's election. Such a beginning would not promise well for Northumbrian nunneries, yet after all what could promise better? But Bega's importunity was in the end more than a match for the bishop's reluctance. She gave him no rest; the historian distinctly states that, not content with seasonable requests, she was unseasonably urgent about it —instans inopportune—so strongly was she bent upon it. At length St. Aidan gave way, and Bega laid down her dignity to her own infinite contentment and exceeding joy.

Most inconsistent Saint! She loved her nuns quite as well as her own soul. She procures the stranger from the banks of the Wear, the blessed Hilda, to be unanimously elected abbess, her election to be more than willingly confirmed by St. Aidan; and St. Hilda resolutely refusing the proffered dignity, Bega forces it upon her with most earnest supplications, as though her acceptance of it would make *her* conscience more than easy about her resignation and the welfare of the spiritual children whom she had gathered together. "The altercation between these friends of God," says the chronicler, "was sufficiently humble and friendly, seeing that each preferred the life of the other to her own; nor was there

less strife between them about not receiving preferment than is wont to arise among the ambitious, infected with the poison of simoniacal heresy, about obtaining advancement. Yet the humility of Bega in this part was victorious, and Hilda's obedience, although unwilling, still submitted to be conquered." Hartlepool certainly witnessed strange scenes in that seventh century; the picturesque peninsula, the green turf glistening with the eyes of wild thyme which the salt spray spares, the broad sunny bay, the many-chambered rocks resonant for ever with the sea's innocuous thunder, the white climbing columns of angry foam which the children watch so long and so delightedly, these are all still there; but the nunnery is gone, and St. Bega is gone, and St. Hilda, and the gentle community, and the matins and the diurnal hours, and the mental prayer, and the examinations of conscience, and the humiliations in chapter, and all the holy and beautiful theology of monastic vows; these are gone, and much more is gone with them, which would be a blessing to Hartlepool, even though it does not miss them, for there are stages when disease has gone so far that the patients do not dream they are so near being incurable. Such was Hartlepool in the seventh century; the bustling port, the new harbour, the railway, the growing town enlarging itself to meet its novel position, are doubtless things of Christian import and furnish grave questions for the Church to solve. Certainly opening our eyes to the merits of the past ought to do anything but blind us to the *real* advantages of the present, yet there is a Christian

admonition too in getting ourselves to imagine Hartlepool as it was when the stags were but half dispossessed, and the first nun of the north was the croziered queen of that fair peninsula.

The endowments of the Saints are very various. The gifts requisite for founding a monastery and sheltering it in its feeble beginnings are quite different from those required for the government of an established and thoroughly furnished community. They are of a much rarer kind; and it would appear, from many instances, that where they have been given God does not suffer the possessors of them to rest. They are, as it were, driven forth and driven forth perpetually to make new beginnings, and so fulfil their functions in the Church. An active yet very settled disposition, forbearing patience, power of influencing others, a quickness, almost inventive, to detect ways and means, an aptness to use them, a dexterity in converting seeming obstacles into real succours, a calm foresight and a very gentle determination, —these seem on the whole the qualities required in a founder. St. Theresa, for example had a singular talent that way, which may be discerned even through the modest concealments of her autobiography, and her accounts of her sixteen chief foundations, written in obedience to the orders of her confessors, Francis Garcia of Toledo, the Dominican, and father Ripaldi, the Jesuit. Thus also we read of St. David before he settled at Ross, that he "went about preaching and founding monasteries," which seems a strange method of expression at first sight, and of St. Lugid we

read that he founded a *hundred* monasteries. So in like manner was Bega driven forth, from Copeland by the pirates, from Hartlepool by her own humility and thirst for perfection, from both places doubtless by God's vocation. So long as there were the obstacles, perplexities, and anxieties of a new foundation to cope with, so long Bega found no danger or distress in being foremost. It was no more than the privilege of labouring and suffering above others. But when quietness brought dignity, honour, and power, her lowliness took the alarm. Her subsequent history is very obscure, obscure as the holy abbess would have wished it to be, when she bade Hilda farewell, and left her hard-won promontory behind. But it seems not improbable that she too had the gift of making foundations. Beal, or Beag Hall, near Pomfret, is supposed by some to have been one of her foundations;[1] and her name is connected with three other places in Yorkshire, viz., Tadcaster, Newton Kyme, and Aberford. However it seems agreed, on the whole, though not without dissentient voices, that when she left Hartlepool she went to Calcaria, and further that Calcaria is Tadcaster, a town nine miles south of York, and near the river Wharfe. At Tadcaster she "built herself a mansion, and led a life of great perfection there for a long time." But it does not appear whether the mansion for herself was a monastery, or simply a hermitage; but one would infer from the mention of her great perfection, and from her

[1] Mr. Tomlinson states that there is no evidence of this, p. 17.

having resigned the government of Hartlepool because it stood in the way of her perfection, that her life at Tadcaster was that of a hermit. What interior trials she suffered, what heights she climbed, and to what a union with God the blessed virgin now attained, is unknown to any but the Spirit who led her as He pleased along the paths of perfection, and in a measure possibly to her Guardian Angel. Enough for us that she lives to intercede with our Intercessor for the Church of those parts which she illustrated by her sanctity.

One pleasure there was which Bega did not think it well to deny herself: a visit, said to have been annual,[1] to her successor St. Hilda, then abbess of the famous monastery of Whitby. During the seven years of St. Hilda's weary sickness the monk says that Bega "visited her frequently and dwelt a long time with her." This looks as if either the visit had never been a formal yearly courtesy, or at least very naturally ceased to be so when it pleased God to subject St. Hilda to such long and acute sufferings. Evident it is that there was a most dear and holy friendship between those great Saints, such as would not steal the hearts of either from their heavenly Spouse, but would spur the emulous feet of both in the way of perfection.

St. Hilda in the last year of her life founded a nunnery at Hackness; thither St. Bega came, on a visit to the nuns, a few days before St. Hilda's death. The abbess was not at Hackness herself,

[1] See No. iv. of this work.

but, as it would appear, at Whitby, and had left a nun named Freitha to govern the new community for the time. Hackness, it must be remembered, is thirteen miles from Whitby. Now one night about cock-crowing, that is, before matins, Bega was lying in the dormitory at Hackness. Suddenly she heard in the spirit the great bell of Whitby convent, which was tolled to call the community together when any of them was dead ; and above she beheld an immense light pouring down from heaven, and filling every part of the building, the roof of which seemed to be entirely taken away, and amid the intolerable blaze she discerned what she was given to understand was the soul of St. Hilda, borne by angels into heaven, and overpassing the realms of purgatory. When she came to herself, Bega, uncertain whether she had dreamed a dream or seen a vision, felt inwardly sure that God had taken St. Hilda to herself. Half in sorrow, half in fear, she awakened Freitha, and the whole community rose up, and for the rest of the night sang psalms and said prayers for the repose of their blessed mother's soul. In the morning some of the monks came from Whitby to acquaint them with the decease of the abbess, which took place at the very hour when it had been revealed to Bega.

In its outward circumstances this holy legend looks at first sight like a modern ghost story. Of course it is really a very different thing, if for no other reason, at least for this, that the two persons concerned were blessed Saints of the holy church. But the legend is interesting for another reason,

and on such a subject-matter by interesting is meant edifying. If by observant classification important laws are come at in human sciences, perhaps by a reverent and minute attention to all that is preternatural in the lives of the Saints a serious man might come to learn a great deal that was very solemn indeed, and which would serve for the illustration of many principles of ascetic and still more of mystic theology handed down by the anchorets and monks and spiritual masters of the Church. So far as many actions are concerned, which seem to the world as if reversing right and wrong, there is most undeniably a singular uniformity visible in the endless variety of the lives of the Saints; and it may be that there is a similar uniformity in the preternatural visions, revelations, and the like, which are so seemingly various in sacred histories; and if it be so it must be extremely instructive, though it demands a most reverential study as remembering Whose dealings they are which we are venturing to gaze upon. Now there has been hardly any kind of visions, so obviously making a class, as the visions of disembodied spirits either at the moment of departure or issuing out of purgatory; and this revelation made to St. Bega of her friend's decease, having been shared by so many other Saints both ancient and modern, is more interesting than if it were some distinctive favour granted to herself only. Thus St. Kentigern saw the angels carrying up to heaven the soul of the great St. David at the very hour of his death; St. Benedict saw the soul of St. Scholastica his sister pass upwards like a dove,

and though his own soul was not seen, yet the luminous track by which it ascended was visible to some of his monks; and when those who revere the primitive ages of the Church feel backward to admit the many stories told of St. Theresa and St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi seeing souls liberated from purgatory, they should remember how St. Perpetua early in the third century saw the soul of her little brother Dinocrates issuing purified from an intermediate place of darkness, when she interceded for him in prison after her first glorious confession. Perhaps it may incline some readers to think more worthily of what is here but an obscure English legend, resting on evidence not particularly clear, if we go a little out of our way, and put side by side with it a story, strikingly similar in all points, told of no less a Saint than St. Benedict and by no less a doctor than St. Gregory the Great, whose memory may well be blessed among Englishmen.

Among the early Benedictine monasteries was that of St. Sebastian in Campania; Mabillon calls it thirty miles from Monte Cassino. The abbot of this monastery, Servandus, a deacon, was an intimate friend of St. Benedict, and St. Gregory tells us they used often to meet to hold spiritual conferences and thus to give each other the sweet food of the heavenly country in pious discourses. One night after they had separated, St. Benedict remained in the upper part of the tower in which he generally dwelt, and Servandus went to rest at the bottom, there being a staircase communicating between the two apartments. It was not yet time

for matins, but Benedict was one whose eyes full open prevented the night-watches. He was standing at his window, possibly that the chill night-air might dispel his drowsiness, and there he prayed to God. It was a calm night, and suddenly a great light was poured down from heaven, which absorbed all the darkness, till the night became even more radiant than the natural day. It seemed to St. Benedict that the whole world was so collected under that light and illumined by it, that he saw it all at one simultaneous glance, like our blessed Lord's vision from the top of Quarentana. While the Saint stood gazing on this vision he saw a fiery sphere traversing the brightness, and ascending up to heaven. It was borne by angels, and in it St. Benedict discerned what he recognised to be the soul of Germanus, Bishop of Capua. We say *recognised*, as the nearest word to express the meaning, remembering the recognition of Moses and Elias by St. Peter, which was *perhaps* not miraculous but according to some laws of the spiritual world of which we know nothing. St. Benedict immediately called Servandus to ascend the tower, that he might be a witness of the revelation. Servandus, either arriving as the vision was fading or seeing as much with his bodily eye as the inward illumination of his soul allowed, beheld some small portion of the exceeding brightness. Forthwith St. Benedict despatched some one from the neighbouring town to the city of Capua, where he learned that the holy Germanus had departed to a better life at the very hour at which the Saint had been favoured with the vision. And are not all holy men the servants

of Him who spake in old time by vision unto His Saints?

After the death of St. Hilda Bega returned no more to Tadcaster; but abode in the nunnery of Hackness. At her friend's death, whom she did not long survive, she had led a monastic life for more than thirty years; and it may have been some presentiment or foreknowledge of her own coming departure which induced her to remain among St. Hilda's children at Hackness. She entered into her rest on the 31st of October: her biographer says, "Aptly enough, while she was observing the Vigil of All Saints she quitted the world to join their society, that, winter coming upon the earth, all winter might pass away from her, leaving it; and the rain might cease and depart, that eternal spring might shine upon her, and the bloom of roses and the lilies of the valley might appear to her in heaven."

After this the Danes came down like a flood upon the land, and the relics no less than the records of many of the Saints were lost, and their holy houses burnt and plundered, and the Church had much ado, not without miraculous helps, to retrieve what she did retrieve when something like peaceful times came back to her. The very local features of the ancient sanctity were worn out from the face of the land, and in many places irrecoverably obliterated. A very awful judgment it was, and it was truly wonderful how well the Church recovered from it. Amidst the confusion all tradition of St. Bega's burial was lost; the quiet houses which St. Hilda planted were overwhelmed

by the marauding bands, and became miserable desolations instead of goodly homes perpetually vocal with divine psalmody. "The precious pearl lay hid in the heart of the earth," so the monk speaks of St. Bega's body; and so time went on till the twelfth century, somewhere about 460 years after her death, and then it was revealed to some holy men, probably devoted to the memory of the Saint, that she lay buried in the cemetery at Hackness. Supposing the veneration shown by the Catholic Church for the Saints, and the honours paid to their relics, to be, as dogmatic writers teach, a necessary growth of the doctrine of the Incarnation, these discoveries of particular relics at particular times may all have been providentially ordered so as to meet certain emergencies in the Church, and to reinforce her life and vigour at a given season. The holy men were not disobedient to the admonition; they repaired to the cemetery at Hackness, and after much digging they found a sarcophagus on the lid of which were the words, "Hoc est sepulchrum Begu." On removing the lid a small clod (gleda) of her body was found, and a veil upon her head hardly corrupted at all; and a sweet odour breathed from her relics, which were transported to the monastery in solemn procession.

The Cell or Priory of St. Bega on the headland which bears her name on the Cumbrian coast was built in the reign of Henry the First, and a monk named Robert was the first prior. Many miracles were wrought at her intercession in the country round about; and to swear on the bracelet of St.

Bega was the most solemn of all oaths, which few durst break, for many and well authenticated were the instances in which immediate and signal vengeance had fallen upon the offenders. The bracelet appears to have been found by the people after her precipitate flight. It would be cherished first as an affecting memorial of a benefactress, and then held in reverence as the authentic relic of a Saint. There are many interesting traces of the way in which this mysterious bracelet acted as something humanising in that wild district, and stood in the stead of law during times in which law's voice, however majestic, was too calm to be heard. It would be beyond the scope of this memoir to give a detailed account of these miracles, resting as they do on very slight evidence, and all tending one way, namely, to show how the devotion to St. Bega was, independent of higher ends to separate souls, a great power of civilisation in the region where she had dedicated herself to God in a solitary and virgin life. One miracle, however, may be related, not as resting on better evidence than the others, but partly as having a singular poetical beauty, and partly as being a thing not at all unlikely to happen (though there is no proof that it did happen in this case) in rude times when the quiet hand of social order could not make itself felt, and the monuments of ancient piety were likely to be lost amid the covetous knights and rough-handed barons, who looked with jaundiced eye on the fair fields and good broad lands which had been severed from their patrimony and given to the Church by their more devout ancestors.

The story runs thus. Ranulph Meschines was a very great man in Copeland, and at one time a very good man, which is not often the case with great men. He had a special devotion to St. Bega, as was natural for a Copeland man; and he thought it very wrong the Saint should have no shrine in those parts where she had led such a marvellous and holy life. But Ranulph did not content himself with thinking about the matter. There was a much shorter interval between word and deed then than there unhappily is in our days. Ranulph started off to York,—he could not go to a better place;—there he went to the monastery of our Blessed Lady: whose monks so fit as St. Mary's to serve a Saint like Bega, a virgin too herself of royal lineage? there he asked for some monks and got them. He carried his prize into Copeland; the goodly town of Kirkby stood on or near the site of Bega's hermitage, and luckily it was his own town, houses, people and all, and he gave it with sundry lands to God and St. Mary, and built a cell in honour of St. Bega, and the place was called Kirkby Begog, now St. Bees. Afterwards Ranulph wished he had waited a little longer, and he began to open his ears to what worldly people said about the holy friars, and to think that monks were very useless people, and he had not even the consolation of knowing what a great many people would be of his opinion in times to come. However, Ranulph wished he had his lands back again: the oftener he looked on the goodly crops in the monks' fields, probably much better cultivated than his own, the more Protestant he grew. As was said before, in

those days men acted upon their thoughts with a rapidity unknown at present: he had made a mistake certainly in bringing these monks into Copeland; the next best thing was to starve them out. Ranulph was assuredly, as modern historians speak, in advance of his age; he anticipated exactly (for there is a striking uniformity in wickedness irrespective of centuries) the line of conduct which Henry the Eighth adopted, only Ranulph was not a king, so he could not hang the prior of St. Bees. Like Henry, Ranulph wished to have the lands of the Church, and yet to be quite orthodox; so he was obliged, as it would have been very unseemly then to have laid violent hands on the monks, to descend to the more commonplace remedy of a lawsuit, which must have been both tedious and mortifying to a strong-handed man like Ranulph. Still monks were the order of the day then, so nothing else would do. After many delays, which no doubt teased the poor monks as well as chafed Ranulph, the lawyers fixed a day for the final and peremptory decision, and summoned the country-people to be eye-witnesses of the settling of the boundaries, so that it might become a matter of notoriety, and not be called in question again. Ranulph did not want the church or the conventual precinct: they would be awkward property to a man of his turn of mind; he would be content with the lands. The unhappy monks, frightened by Ranulph and bewildered by law, thought the best thing they could do was to invocate St. Bega, *i.e.* to put their trust in God, for which the other was only a roundabout method of expression, which the

reader may or may not approve. Well—the day came, and the monks, and the lawyers, and the country-people, and Ranulph too. Doubtless nobody stayed at home in Copeland but those who were too old or too young to leave; and perhaps we should not be mistaken in divining that the sympathies of the rustics were all with the monks, for it was only the love of the poor, ignorant, uneducated, superstitious people, which kept monks uppermost so long. Now, if Bega was to appear to settle the question herself, in what possible form could she come better or more aptly or with more unmistakable figure, virgin as she was, than in whitest, chastest snow?[1] Nobody could doubt what that meant: and so it was: down came a most sudden and unlooked-for fall of whitest snow—mountains and tree-tops, house-roofs and seashore, all through Copeland were covered with dazzling snow—but every rood which the monks claimed was most accurately marked out: not a flake fell thereon: all Copeland was white, and the sea was blue, and the monks' lands, like a coloured province in a map, all of radiant green. Thus there could be no question but that Bega had herself put a most summary stop to the lawsuit; the monks thought, for they tell us so, of Gideon's fleece; the rustics were convinced; the lawyers did not, perhaps durst not, say they were not; and it was plain the less Ranulph said the better, for he was not in a particularly pleasant or dignified position. This story is interesting as showing a some-

[1] The reader may remember the beautiful tradition of the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore at Rome, otherwise St. Mary ad Nives.

what strange relation between a convent and its "pious founder";[1] it may be hoped such relative positions were not common in those days. It is certainly in that point of view a very ugly story.

It has already been mentioned that on the headland of St. Bees there is still a school of Christian doctrine, something like a local connection, a frail yet unbroken tradition, between old times and our own. And it is said[2] that at this day the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages resort to the Church of St. Bees at Easter for the purpose of communicating, and that from a considerable distance, insomuch that the village is quite crowded, and the clergy are obliged to have an early Communion in addition to the one which follows morning prayers. There is something very, very mournful in the way in which we are driven to cherish even such poor acknowledgments of love for the Catholic Past.

By the kind permission of the author we are allowed to reprint entire Mr. Wordsworth's beautiful stanzas on St. Bees, written, be it observed, so long ago as 1833. The date is noticed as giving a fresh instance of the remarkable way in which his poems did in divers places anticipate the revival of Catholic doctrines among us. When any one considers the tone of sneering which was almost

[1] Nicholson and Burns make *William* Meschines, Ranulph's brother, the founder or restorer (if the Danes had destroyed a previous cell) of St. Bees.

[2] By Mr. Tomlinson, note, p. 80.

universal in English authors when treating of a religious past with which they did not sympathise, the tone of these verses is very striking indeed, the more striking since Mr. Wordsworth's works prove him to be very little in sympathy with Roman doctrine on the whole. Yet the affectionate reverence for the Catholic past, the humble consciousness of a loss sustained by ourselves, the readiness to put a good construction on what he cannot wholly receive, are in this poem in very edifying contrast with even the half-irreverent sportiveness of Mr. Southey's pen when employed on similar subject-matters. The poet, it may be observed, assumes on the authority of county historians a Cell of St. Bega destroyed by the Danes, and so traces the history of the sacred headland down to the modern college. The reader, acquainted with Mr. Wordsworth's poems, will find an alteration in the last stanza; it has been printed as it is here given at the request of the author himself.

STANZA

SUGGESTED IN A STEAMBOAT OFF ST. BEE'S HEADS, ON THE COAST OF CUMBERLAND.

If Life were slumber on a bed of down,
Toil unimposed, vicissitude unknown,
Sad were our lot: no hunter of the hare
Exults like him whose javelin from the lair
Has roused the lion; no one plucks the rose,
Whose proffered beauty in safe shelter blows
'Mid a trim garden's summer luxuries,
With joy like his who climbs, on hands and knees,
For some rare plant, yon Headland of St. Bees.

This independence upon oar and sail,
This new indifference to breeze or gale,
This straight-lined progress, furrowing a flat lea,
And regular as if locked in certainty—
Depress the hours. Up, Spirit of the storm!
That Courage may find something to perform;
That Fortitude, whose blood disdains to freeze
At Danger's bidding, may confront the seas,
Firm as the towering Headlands of St. Bees.

Dread cliff of Baruth! *that* wild wish may sleep,
Bold as if men and creatures of the Deep
Breathed the same element; too many wrecks
Have struck thy sides, too many ghastly decks
Hast thou looked down upon, that such a thought
Should here be welcome, and in verse enwrought:
With thy stern aspect better far agrees
Utterance of thanks that we have passed with ease,
As millions thus shall do, the Headlands of St. Bees.

Yet, while each useful Art augments her store,
What boots the gain if Nature should lose more?
And Wisdom, that once held a Christian place
In man's intelligence sublimed by grace?
When Bega sought of yore the Cumbrian coast,
Tempestuous winds her holy errand crossed:
She knelt in prayer—the waves their wrath appease;
And, from her vow well weighed in Heaven's decrees,
Rose, where she touched the strand, the Chantry of St. Bees.

"Cruel of heart were they, bloody of hand,"
Who in these Wilds then struggled for command;
The strong were merciless, without hope the weak;
Till this bright Stranger came, fair as daybreak,
And as a cresset true that darts its length
Of beamy lustre from a tower of strength;
Guiding the mariner through troubled seas,
And cheering oft his peaceful reveries,
Like the fixed Light that crowns yon Headland of St. Bees.

To aid the Votaress, miracles believed
Wrought in men's minds, like miracles achieved;
So piety took root; and Song might tell
What humanising virtues near her cell
Sprang up, and spread their fragrance wide around;
How savage bosoms melted at the sound
Of gospel-truth enchained in harmonies
Wafted o'er waves, or creeping through close trees,
From her religious Mansion of St. Bees.

When her sweet Voice, that instrument of love,
Was glorified, and took its place, above
The silent stars, among the angelic quire,
Her chantry blazed with sacrilegious fire,
And perished utterly; but her good deeds
Had sown the spot that witnessed them, with seeds
Which lay in earth expectant, till a breeze
With quickening impulse answered their mute pleas,
And lo! a *statelier* pile, the Abbey of St. Bees.

There are the naked clothed, the hungry fed ;
And Charity extendeth to the dead
Her intercessions made for the soul's rest
Of tardy penitents ; or for the best
Among the good (when love might else have slept,
Sickened, or died) in pious memory kept.
Thanks to the austere and simple Devotees,
Who, to that service bound by venial fees,
Keep watch before the altars of St. Bees.

Are not, in sooth, their requiems sacred ties
Woven out of passion's sharpest agonies,
Subdued, composed, and formalised by art,
To fix a wiser sorrow in the heart?
The prayer for them whose hour is passed away
Says to the Living, profit while ye may !
A little part, and that the worst, he sees
Who thinks that priestly cunning holds the keys
That best unlock the secrets of St. Bees.

Conscience, the timid being's inmost light,
Hope of the dawn and solace of the night,
Cheers these Recluses with a steady ray
In many an hour when judgment goes astray.
Ah ! scorn not hastily their rule who try
Earth to despise, and flesh to mortify ;
Consume with zeal, in wingèd ecstasies
Of prayer and praise forget their rosaries,
Nor hear the loudest surges of St. Bees.

Yet none so prompt to succour and protect
The forlorn traveller, or sailor wrecked
On the bare coast ; nor do they grudge the boon
Which staff and cockle-hat and sandal shoon
Claim for the pilgrim : and, though chidings sharp
May sometimes greet the strolling minstrel's harp,
It is not then when, swept with sportive ease,
It charms a feast-day throng of all degrees,
Brightening the archway of revered St. Bees.

How did the cliffs and echoing hills rejoice
What time the Benedictine Brethren's voice,
Imploring or commanding with meet pride,
Summoned the chiefs to lay their feuds aside,
And under one blest ensign serve the Lord
In Palestine. Advance, indignant Sword!
Flaming till thou from Panym hands release
That Tomb, dread centre of all sanctities
Nursed in the quiet Abbey of St. Bees.

But look we now to them whose minds from far
Follow the fortunes which they may not share.
While in Judea Fancy loves to roam,
She helps to make a Holy-land at home:
The Star of Bethlehem from its sphere invites
To sound the crystal depth of maiden rights;
And wedded life, through Scriptural mysteries,
Heavenward ascends with all her charities,
Taught by the hooded Celibates of St. Bees.

Who with the ploughshare clove the barren moors,
And to green meadows changed the swampy shores?
Thinned the rank woods; and for the cheerful grange
Made room where wolf and boar were used to range?
Who taught, and showed by deeds, that gentler chains
Should bind the vassal to his lord's domains?
The thoughtful Monks, intent their God to please,
For Christ's dear sake, by human sympathies
Poured from the bosom of thy Church, St. Bees!

But all availed not; by a mandate given
Through lawless will the Brotherhood was driven
Forth from their cells; their ancient House laid low
In Reformation's sweeping overthrow.
But now once more the local Heart revives,
The inextinguishable Spirit strives.
Oh may that Power who hushed the stormy seas,
And cleared a way for the first votaries,
Prosper the new-born College of St. Bees!

Alas! the Genius of our age, from Schools
Less humble, draws her lessons, aims, and rules;
Would merge, Idolatress of formal skill,
In her own systems God's Eternal Will.
To Her despising faith in things unseen
Matter and Spirit are as one Machine.
Better, if Reason's triumphs match with these,
Her flight before the bold credulities
That furthered the first teaching of St. Bees.

1833.

LIFE OF

ST. WILLIAM

ARCHBISHOP OF YORK, A.D. 1140–1154



The Rt. Revd. Robert Aston Coffin

ch Col. Oakland. U.S.A. 1843.

LIFE OF

ST. WILLIAM

ARCHBISHOP OF YORK, A.D. 1140–1154

CHAPTER I

ST. WILLIAM IN PROSPERITY

St. William was the son of Lord Herbert, by Emma of Blois, sister to Stephen, King of England, and was born about the latter end of the eleventh century. Little is known of the early part of his life; and he must have been somewhat advanced in years before he entered upon the field of public action. More than ordinary care seems to have been paid to his education: his parents were not forgetful of the many dangers which beset the path of boyhood; for when he was quite young, they committed him to the charge of a preceptor, under whose care he made great progress in general literature and the studies of the times. Nor was he remarkable only for his learning. There were in his character the elements and ground-work of what he was to be hereafter. Great purity and

integrity of life, exceeding beneficence to the poor, together with a kind and amiable disposition, formed the soil in which the seeds of the saintly character were to be sown, which, as we shall see in the sequel, took deep root, and in the end brought forth fruit unto perfection.

But this perfection came not without difficulty and reverses. God's ways for fashioning and moulding His saints are manifold : some He leads on and on in holy innocence even from the waters of the Font, and suffers them not to be led astray, nor their baptismal robe to be spotted by the taints of sin ; others He tries by affliction, others by the fierce assaults of Satan, and the powers of evil, while others He exposes to the vanities and allurements of the world. He sets them in high places ; He gives them riches ; He allows them to be courted and honoured, and then by some sudden reverse, by the failure of long cherished hopes or plans, He makes them see the utter nothingness of the world. They wake as from a dream, and to their astonishment find they have been feeding upon vanities, and that the only reality is the Cross: and thus even these are led onwards to perfection, and in the end become the chosen ones of God. They do indeed bring forth the fruit of saintliness, although for a while the good seed seemed well-nigh choked, and they were judged by others to be tending in their course towards a miserable and hopeless end. To this latter class does he belong, whose life we have undertaken to write, and not to anticipate the events in his history, it may be briefly stated, that in his case the graces of the saint shone not forth, until he

had endured the abasements and humiliation of the Penitent.

William's position in the world and circumstances were against him: he was of the Royal family, and therefore thrown at once into the temptations and corruptions of a Court life and Court influence. His uncle, Henry of Blois, Bishop of Winchester, and the Pope's Legate, was his patron, and to him he owed his promotion. Henry was doubtless a man of much ability, and, as a statesman, full of intrigue and court policy, was well suited for the times in which he lived; but viewing him as a bishop and not as a statesman, he cannot claim our respect or admiration: we cannot acquit him of great worldly-mindedness, not to say actual want of principle. Such was the man to whom William was under great obligation, and it need hardly be said that it requires a mind of no ordinary uprightness and independence to escape the evil effects which are almost invariably the consequences of being patronised and advanced by those in authority. The courts of kings and lordly palaces are not fit schools for the Church's saints; few pass through them without feeling their evil influence, to many they have proved their ruin. In addition to this,[1] William was brought up in the midst of riches and pleasures, those sad impediments to progress in the spiritual life: and that they had a bad effect upon his character is proved from the unfitness which is recorded of him for labour or any great exertion of body or mind, which led to a habit

[1] John Prior Hagust, ap. Twysden, a. 1146, p. 274.

of occupying himself in matters of minor importance when more urgent duties were demanding his attention.[1]

But we will now proceed at once to his history: he first comes before us as Treasurer of the Cathedral Church of York, an office to which he was promoted from personal merit, and which he discharged in a very exemplary manner. This gave him the opportunity of exercising his charitable disposition, and on being made treasurer, he distributed his own wealth amongst the poor, "considering no treasure more precious than giving to those in poverty."[2] The year in which he was made treasurer is not known, and there is no notice of dates respecting him until the year 1140, from which time we are able to place the various events of his life in their proper order.

On the 5th of February 1140, the venerable Thurstan, Archbishop of York, died;[3] he had been Archbishop for six-and-twenty years, and had governed his diocese with much vigour and godly prudence. He had been chaplain to King Henry I., who found in him a most valuable counsellor, so much so that during the king's life he is said to have managed all the affairs of England and Normandy.[4] He founded eight religious houses, and among them the once celebrated Abbey of Fountains, to which he ordained one Richard, a Benedictine monk, as the first abbot, December 15, 1132. A short time

[1] John Prior Hagust, ap. Twysden, a. 1146, p. 276.

[2] Bromton, ap. Twysden, p. 1041; Capgrave, fol. 310, 2.

[3] John Hagust, p. 268.

[4] Bolland, Act. SS. in vita S. Gul. June 8; Stubbs, ap. Twysden, p. 1714.

before his death he resigned his see, and retired as a monk to the Cluniac Abbey of Pontefract, where he finished his course in peace and tranquillity.[1]

At his death the spirit of contention and discord began to show itself amongst the clergy of York. For a whole year the Dean and Chapter, and the rest of the clergy in whom the power of election was vested, were divided in opinion as to a fit person to fill the vacant see. At this period the English Church was suffering under the commotion to which the great ecclesiastical questions of the day had given rise. The bishops and superior ecclesiastics were necessarily politicians, and were drawn into the party and state feuds that were then agitating the land. Moreover, the whole country was in a state of especial excitement, for Stephen had usurped the crown, and most of the bishops who had sworn allegiance to the Empress Mathilda had turned round and were now, in spite of their oaths, siding with the king. Mathilda herself was in England, making the utmost endeavours to gain the kingdom, and the nation was suffering from all the horrors of a civil war. The two parties found their representatives among the York clergy; and as each made it a great point to get a man of their own opinions, and there seemed no chance of their coming to a decision without some external interference, at last the Bishop of Winchester interposed, and at his advice they elected one Henry de Coilly, who was also a nephew of King Stephen's and at this time Abbot of Caen.

1 Bromton, p. 1028. Dugdale, Monast. Angl. vol. v. p. 286–88. Manriquez, Ann. Cisterc. a. 1143, cap. ii. § 5.

The Pope, however, declared that he could not be elected archbishop unless he gave up his present preferment. This we must suppose he was unwilling to do, for in January 1141, the Dean and Chapter again assembled for the election, and now the majority decided in favour of William the Treasurer,[1] the subject of this memoir, whose reputation for purity of life and general goodness pointed him out as a fit person for this important station.[2]

This appointment would of course cause much

[1] Bromton, p. 1028.

[2] Alford, vol. iv. pars post, p. 20, quoting Roger de Hoveden, Matthew of Westminster, Trivet, and others, states that Henry Murdach was elected at the same time as St. William; but this seems incorrect, and for the following reasons: 1st, Henry Murdach was not made Abbot of Fountains, according to Dugdale (Dugdale's Monast. Angl. vol. v. p. 288; see also Burton's Monast. Ebor.), until 1143, and, according to John of Hexham, until 1146; and it is certain that he was abbot at the time of his election to the see of York, in 1148. 2nd, It is probable that at the time of St. William's election, Henry was Abbot of Vauclair, from whence he was sent by St. Bernard to Fountains (Vid. Historiens de France, vol. xiii. p. 698. Chron. Alberici Trium Fontium monachi.); his name occurs in an ancient chronicle, under the year 1134, as the first Abbot of Vallis Clara, and therefore he must have been there more than nine years. He had been one of those sent from Clairvaux, at the founding of Fountains in 1132. (Vid. Manriq. Ann. Cist. 1132, cap. 8, § 6.)

The author of Gallia Christiana in his account of the monastery of Vallis Clara (Vauclair) gives the following dates (Gallia Xtiania, vol. ix. p. 633):—

Founded 1134.

Henry Murdach first Abbot, 1135.

Abbot of Fountains, 1138.

Archbishop of York, 1148.

It is possible that Henry Murdach might have become known to the clergy of York during his two years' residence at Fountains, 1132–1134, and so might have been nominated by part of the electors to fill the vacant see, in 1140, although he was absent, but there seems no reason to suppose that he was in England at the time of the election.

displeasure amongst the supporters of Mathilda: they would naturally say that it was a piece of court patronage; and in this they were probably right. Stephen had shown himself no friend to the Church, or at least to her bishops. Before Mathilda entered the kingdom, he had seized the bishops of Salisbury and Lincoln, thrown them into dungeons, got possession of their castles, and made a threat of starving the former the means of obtaining the submission of the Bishop of Ely. His own brother, who was the Pope's legate, had been driven to summon him to defend his conduct before a council. Stephen stopped its proceedings by force, and completed his crime by seizing from the altar the remainder of the Bishop of Salisbury's property, which he had on his misfortunes given to his church.[1] Some years later we find him trying to force an Archbishop of York to consecrate a Bishop of Durham against his will, and refusing a safe conduct to the Pope's legate. However, general dissatisfaction or suspicion was not a sufficient ground for nullifying the election of William: certain definite charges must be brought against him: and such a charge was forthcoming, though it proceeded from a person not calculated to add to its weight by his own character. As soon as it was seen how the election was likely to turn, Osbert, Archdeacon of York, who is described as a man fond of power, and who on this occasion was excited, as it appears, by feelings of envy, prejudiced the minds of the better part of the electors against William, notwithstanding the clergy

[1] John Hagust, p. 268.

generally, as well as the people, were strongly in favour of his election. But still his allegation deserved the most serious attention. There was no denying the prominent part which William, Earl of York,[1] the king's minister had taken in the election. He had shown the greatest anxiety that it should fall on William, so much so, that it is said by some writers that he actually commanded the Dean and Chapter to elect him in obedience to an order from the king. If this were so, the election would, strictly speaking, have been illegal, and we shall see as we go on that this was the point on which the whole dispute eventually turned, and which alone was sufficient to nullify the proceeding. This Earl of York gave occasion also to Walter the Archdeacon of London's opposition to St. William. The archdeacon, supposing that the liberty of election was interfered with by this mandate from the king, was proceeding to Stephen to expostulate with him on the subject; on his road he was intercepted by the earl, who took him prisoner and confined him at his castle at Biham.[2]

[1] It is probable that this William was the first titular earl of this county. He was William le Gros, of the house of Champaigne, and Earl of Albemarle, and was made Earl of Yorkshire, or, as some say, of York, by Stephen, in 1138, after the victory over the Scots, at the famous battle of the Standard. On the same occasion, Robert de Ferrers was made Earl of Derbyshire. "Willielmum de Albamarla in Eboracensi, et Robertum de Ferrers in Derbyensi scyra Comites fecit." (Vid. Rich. Hagust, de bello Standardii, ap. Twysden, p. 323, and Drake's Antiquities of York, B. i. ch. viii. p. 349.)

[2] Biham, *Bytham*, or *Bitham*, is situated in the SE. part of Lincolnshire. The Abbey of Vaudey, or De Valle Dei, was first founded here by William, Earl of Albemarle, in 1147. The monks, however, finding some inconveniences in this place, removed to Vaudy, in the parish of Edenham, in the same county. (Dugdale, vol. v. p. 489.)

Notwithstanding the opposition, William, after his election, was introduced[1] to Stephen at Lincoln, who received him with much kindness and friendship, and confirmed him in the archiepiscopal lands and possessions. This, however, was not sufficient to put down the party opposed to William, and the king was not in a condition to enforce his election even if he had wished to do so; in consequence nothing could be determined upon, neither party would give way, and at last Henry, the Bishop of Winchester, advised William to appeal to the Pope and to seek an audience at Rome. Innocent II. was at this time Pope, and had occupied the chair of St. Peter since the year 1130. Theobald, however, the Archbishop of Canterbury, of whom we shall have occasion to speak more particularly hereafter, was connected with the party opposed to Stephen; and hearing of the election, and how it had been conducted, he sent immediately to Rome and anticipated William's messengers. He gave a most unfavourable view of William's case, declaring that the election was null and void, and according to the Cistercian annalist, who however is of no authority whatever, he laid some very heavy charges against William's private character.[2]

[1] John Hagust, ubi sup.

[2] Describing him as "modicum scientiâ, prudentiaque inexpertem, sed quod longe deterius fœdum moribus et non occultis vitiis defamatum." We may here observe that there is nothing in St. William's history, as far as we are able to judge of it, not even St. Bernard's strong language against him, to warrant the above remarks. St. Bernard's strongest and most unfavourable expressions need not affect St. William's private character; and Manriquez the annalist (Vid. his Ann. Cist. 1143, cap. iii. § 1) is of the seventeenth century.

William's messengers on arriving at Rome found that others had been beforehand with them, and instead of receiving from the Pope the confirmation of the election, together with the pallium, returned back to York with an order from the Pope that William should appear before him at Rome to answer for himself. Matters now took a more definite shape, and William's accusers became more numerous and hostile, and they seemed determined never to give way until their point was gained. A fresh charge was now brought against his friends, and that was simony; they said he had gained his election from bribery. This, however, was never proved against him, neither was it, as we shall see, the charge on the truth or falsehood of which his cause was tried at Rome. However, it was so far believed to be true as to have been the cause of Robert Bisech, Prior of Hexham, giving up the government of his priory, which was in William's diocese, and retiring as a monk to St. Bernard at Clairvaux.

Early in the year 1142 William's cause was heard at Rome, in the Consistory of Pope Innocent. Walter, the Archdeacon of London, appeared with the charges of several abbots and priors against him; and it was ordered that all parties, both those present and those who were absent, should appear at Rome for the final settlement of the question, on the third Sunday in Lent in the following year.[1] Amongst his accusers were William, Abbot of Rievaux; Richard, Abbot of Fountains; Cuthbert,

[1] John Hagust, p. 271.

Prior of Gisburn; Wallevus, Prior of Kirkham; and Rodbertus Hospitalis[1]—Cistercians, it will be observed, and therefore friends of St. Bernard.

In obedience to the Pope's commands, the above-mentioned abbots and priors met at Rome in the beginning of 1143, together with William and his coadjutors. His accusers then laid their charges before the Pope; the sum of which was that William, Earl of York, had appeared as the king's minister, and had in the presence of the Chapter, and before their election had been decided on, commanded William the Treasurer to be elected archbishop by the king's authority. It does not appear that any *definite* charge of simony was alleged against him, though other complaints were made, and therefore perhaps this amongst them; still one should have thought that if any act of simony had been committed, it would have constituted at least one of the charges publicly laid before the Pope, and have been treated as of far greater importance than the question of the validity of the election. This is certainly an argument in William's favour; for it is hardly credible that the Pope would have given the decision he did had he considered William in the slightest degree guilty of this great sin, but would have tried the cause on that ground alone; and if the accused had been found guilty, would have deposed him at once as

[1] The same Wallevus does not occur either in Dugdale or Burton, but seems to be St. Waltheof. His father, whose name he bore, is often called Gallevus; and that he was Prior of Kirkham is evident from Fordun Scot., vi. 7. *Hospitalis* is the person appointed in a monastery to receive and attend upon strangers. Vid. Ducange, in text. John Hagust, p. 272.

utterly unfit to feed the flock of Christ, which had been purchased, not with money, but with the precious Blood of the Lamb of God. It is fair then to suppose that the way in which the Pope treated the case showed that he did not consider the charge of simony sufficiently well established for him to proceed against him on that ground alone. He decreed that if the Dean of York would swear that the king's mandate had not been given—that is, that the election had been lawfully and canonically made before, and that if William on his part would swear that he had not sought for the office by any act of bribery, he might be lawfully consecrated. The Dean of York was absent, and whether it was known that he would not take the oath, or whether it was in case he should be prevented by any just cause from so doing, it was requested that certain fit persons might be allowed to swear instead of the dean; this, as we shall see in the sequel, was brought against William as a proof of the illegality of the election and of the interference of the king. The Pope, however, granted the request; nothing more was done at Rome on this occasion, and with a light heart at the thought of his troubles being now well-nigh ended, William returned to England. The storm seemed now to have passed away; all looked bright and fair, and William appeared before the English clergy at Winchester to receive the rite of consecration.

Henry the legate summoned the clergy to a Council at Winchester; many of the dignitaries of the Church were present; it was a time of great

rejoicing and exultation, and the people were so urgent in favour of William that they seemed rather to command his consecration, as if with authority, than to show their great desire for it by the mere expression of their feelings. In obedience to the Pope's injunction, the Dean of York was summoned to the council to take the oath which we have mentioned. He excused himself, on the ground of the disturbances which one William Comyn was causing in the diocese of Durham, which was now vacant, and to which he had been elected, but had not yet been consecrated owing to these said disturbances.

It will furnish some further view into the history of times so different from our own, if, at the risk of losing sight for a while of our main subject, we turn our attention very briefly to these disturbances. Godfrey had been Bishop of Durham, and died on the 6th of May 1140. A few days before his death, William Comyn, Chancellor to the King of Scotland, and also Archdeacon of Worcester, came to Durham to visit the bishop; he was well known to him, and had been partly educated by him. Comyn, when he saw that the bishop's end was approaching, prevailed upon certain of the bishop's private clergy and attendants to promise that they would give up the castle to him as soon as the bishop was dead. Meanwhile the bishop died, upon which Comyn exacted this also from them, that they would conceal his death until he had seen the King of Scotland and should have returned to Durham; he was bent on gaining the bishopric, and therefore it was necessary for him to gain the

king's countenance and assistance in his attempts to obtain it. The necessary steps were taken for keeping the body until its interment,[1] and from Tuesday until Friday the castle was closed, the prior and monks were refused admittance, and the bishop's death carefully concealed. At length the report became general that the bishop was dead, and on the Friday they delivered up the body for burial, pretending, however, that the bishop was only just dead. The funeral took place on Saturday. On Sunday Comyn returned from the Scottish Court, and, taking the government of the castle entirely into his own hands, he admitted the prior and monks to an audience; he then assumed the supreme control, disposed of and ordered all things as he pleased, treating those whom he saw were willing to yield to him with much courtesy, but exercising extreme severity towards those who opposed his wishes. The barons of the country, with few exceptions, he easily gained over to his side, and he next proceeded to gain the favour of the Empress Mathilda. The circumstances of the time favoured his purpose, for it so happened that Stephen had been lately taken prisoner at the battle of Lincoln, February 2, 1141, and the fortunes of the empress seemed on the ascendant. She had been just received with great favour by the citizens of London (in those days one of the most powerful and important bodies in the kingdom), and had proceeded to hold her court there as Sovereign of England. Thither the King of Scotland and his

[1] Proinde quia cadaver aliter teneri non potuit, evisceratus a suis Episcopus, &c.

chancellor betook themselves. The king prevailed upon the empress to give her consent to Comyn's election to the Bishopric of Durham, and she was about to invest him solemnly with the Pastoral Staff and Ring, when the court was suddenly dissolved in great confusion, a conspiracy having been formed against the empress by the citizens of London, who had already made herself odious to them by her haughty behaviour and exorbitant demands. She fled for safety first to Oxford, and then to Winchester, where she was besieged by the very persons who a few days before had delivered London into her hands and saluted her as queen. This revolution frustrated the ambitious designs of Comyn; nothing daunted, however, by the failure of his plans, he returned to Durham, where he remained for three years, giving vent to his cruel and rapacious disposition, but keeping on good terms with the monks,[1] with a view to having their assistance in the prosecution of his designs.

For some time no steps were taken for filling the vacant see; but owing to the great disadvantages arising from such a state of things, the Chapter at length sent the Prior of Durham to the Chapter at York, to consult with them as to the best measures to be pursued towards the election of a fit person to the bishopric. Messengers were sent to Rome to seek advice from the Pope, from whom they received permission to elect whomsoever they

[1] "Multa in Episcopatu cupiditatis imo crudelitatis signa reliquit. Monachis tamen jocundus semper et affabilis erat, a quibus se promovendum sperabat."

would.[1] Accordingly the Prior and Archdeacon of Durham, with several of the regulars connected with the diocese, met together in the chapel of St. Andrew at York (being unable to carry on the election at Durham) and chose as their bishop, William de St. Barbara, Dean of York Cathedral, March 14, 1143. Henry, Bishop of Winchester, who from the first had been of great assistance to the people of Durham against the intruder Comyn, and who had excommunicated him and his adherents, having examined the letters from the Pope, and seen that all had been done duly and in order, introduced the bishop elect to King Stephen, who gave his consent to the election; and on the 20th of June 1143, he was consecrated by Henry at Winchester, in the presence of seven other bishops. Meanwhile William Comyn, as soon as he heard of what was going on at York, did all in his power to stop the election, by watching the roads, and giving orders that all persons proceeding to York should be intercepted and given up to him. He also sent pretended letters from the Chapter, forbidding the election; these, however, were indignantly rejected, and his designs being still frustrated, all that he could now do was to prevent the new bishop coming to Durham: he therefore commenced a system of most cruel and savage persecution against the clergy and all who he supposed sided with him. Some few of the barons, who from the first had opposed Comyn and his party, and were now steadfast in their allegiance to the bishop, prevailed

[1] John Hagulstad, p. 272.

upon him to come to Durham. Yielding to their entreaties, the bishop entered the city the morning after the Assumption, when several of the barons came and did homage to him; amongst them one Roger de Coyniers, who had fortified a stronghold in the diocese for the use of the bishop, who indeed was soon obliged to retreat thither for refuge: for the cruelty and rage of Comyn knew no limits, his system of persecution was frightful. He continued for many days to put to tortures of the most excruciating kind all those who were on the bishop's side. The city presented the most miserable appearance; the divine offices were suspended, the churches profaned, instruments of torture and persons suffering the greatest agonies from them were seen in all the streets: nothing could exceed the fury and licentiousness of the intruder. The bishop was kept in continual siege, first in one fortress and then in another. A truce was made between him and Comyn, but was soon broken by the latter. At length, after a series of the most wild excesses, after much profaneness and sacrilege, the wretched man was induced, for reasons unknown, to implore forgiveness at the bishop's hands.

It will be now confessed that the Dean of York and bishop elect of Durham had had business enough on his hands to constitute a very fair excuse for absenting himself from the Council of Winchester, where we left William waiting for him to give evidence in his favour, according to the Pope's injunction, before his own consecration. The suspense of both the new prelates ended about the same time. As proxies for the Dean of York, there

had appeared Ralph Nuel, Bishop of the Orkneys, Severinus, Abbot of York, and Benedict, Abbot of Whitby, who took the oath required, and afforded the necessary satisfaction for the archbishop elect. On the 26th of September William was consecrated by the Bishop of Winchester, amidst great rejoicings both of clergy and people; and on St. Luke's day following, the bishop, attended by William, Archbishop of York, and the Bishop of Carlisle, was solemnly enthroned, and at the same time William Comyn was admitted to the commencement of his penitence, and promised in the presence of the bishops to make satisfaction as far as that was possible for the injuries he had committed.[1]

[1] This sketch is necessarily imperfect, inasmuch as a full narration of all particulars would form almost a history of itself. All the circumstances are given at great length by Simeon Dunelmensis, Hist. de Dunelmens. Eccles. *ap.* Twysden, and by the Monachus Dunelmensis de Episcop. Dunelmens: in Wharton's Anglia Sacra, p. i. pp. 710–717, to whom we refer the reader.

CHAPTER II

ST. WILLIAM OPPOSED BY ST. BERNARD

IMMEDIATELY after his consecration, William returned to York, where we have no notice of his proceedings, except that on St. Luke's day following he assisted, as we have seen, at the enthronisation of the Bishop of Durham. This would lead us to suppose that the Bishop of Durham was on good terms at least openly with William, and that it was not from any ill-will that he refused to take the oath. William was not permitted to remain long in peace and quiet; fresh trials awaited him, and a new and formidable opponent appeared in the ranks of his enemies. This was St. Bernard.

On September 24, 1143, Pope Innocent died, and on the very same day on which William had been consecrated, Celestine II. was chosen as the new Pope. The news of these two appointments had no sooner reached the ears of St. Bernard, than we find him applying himself, with his wonted zeal and earnestness, against what he supposed was an uncanonical and invalid ordination. It may be asked how St. Bernard, the Abbot of Clairvaux, at such a distance from England, should either know of or interfere with the ecclesiastical affairs of

England? In answer to this question, it will be sufficient to mention that at this time, and for some years previously, St. Bernard had literally been conducting the affairs both ecclesiastical and civil of the whole western Church. Compelled by the earnest entreaties of the Pope to leave the solitude of the peaceful Clairvaux which he so dearly loved, he found himself thrust into the noise and tumult of men and nations: he it was who settled the disputes of princes, as well as the strifes and contentions amongst the clergy. For the space of ten years (1130–1140) he was, as it were, the great moving principle in all the important events of that period. Through his exertions Pope Innocent II. was acknowledged by the principal Christian sovereigns, and the Antipope Anaclete compelled to give way to the all-powerful influence of this man of God. We find him in Aquitaine settling the disputes of William the Duke of that province, whose haughty and rebellious spirit he so completely subdued, that he passed the remainder of his life in penitence, and died a thoroughly altered man. We find him at the Councils of Rheims and Pisa, at Milan, where he compelled the unprincipled Archbishop Anselm to recognise the authority of the Pope. By his preaching and his wondrous miracles, he brought the turbulent population into a state of peace and quiet, and won numberless converts to a religious and penitential life: in short the whole western world was at this time depending on St. Bernard. Wherever he went crowds attended him: his door was always thronged with people wishing to consult him. High and low,

the beggar and the prince, popes and prelates, laymen and clerks, the sinner and the saint, one and all sought from him counsel and guidance, so wonderfully did the grace of God shine forth in all he did or said. And can we wonder then that the holy and religious in our own country should have communicated their distress and their wants to this great apostle, raised up, as it appears, and endued with extraordinary grace and power from on high, for the very purpose of protesting against, and eradicating the abuses and corruptions which then existed, and which so sadly marred and spoiled the beauty of the Bride of Christ? The times of which we write were times of trouble, and of anguish and rebuke for England. Love had waxed cold, and faith was well-nigh dead. The horrors of a civil war were at their height, and its evil effects had penetrated into the recesses of cloister and cathedral. The bishops at this time were but a sorry example to the rest of the clergy; they had mixed themselves up in the quarrels and interests of the State; they seem to have forgotten that their weapons were not the sword and spear, but prayer and fasting, and thus many of them with their fortified castles and numerous retainers, presented the appearance rather of worldly and rapacious barons, than of meek servants and soldiers of the Cross. In such a state of things as this, gladly would those few, who beheld with awe and amazement the corruptions of the Church, and whose hearts were well-nigh bursting with holy indignation at what was going on, seek counsel and support of such an one as St. Bernard, who in this way became acquainted with

the state of the Church, and the affairs of almost every diocese in Europe.

With regard to the affairs of York, it is more than probable that St. Bernard had direct and constant information, and this from two sources. It has already been mentioned that Robert Bisech, Prior of Hexham, being fully persuaded of the truth of the charges brought against William personally, and being unwilling to remain under the jurisdiction of one whom he considered guilty of simony, gave up his house, and retired as a monk to Clairvaux. Here then was a direct channel of information for St. Bernard, who of course would only hear one side of the question, and that the very worst. But in addition to this, the abbeys of Rievaux and Fountains were both under the jurisdiction of Clairvaux, and were of the Cistercian order, and therefore in constant communication with their parent society. We have seen above that the abbots of both these houses had appeared at Rome against St. William in 1143, and in that same year, probably as he was returning home, Richard, the Abbot of Fountains, died at Clairvaux; upon which St. Bernard immediately convened the Chapter to deliberate as to whom they should appoint as his successor. Their choice fell upon Henry Murdach,[1] then Abbot of Vauclair, who, as we have already mentioned, had been induced by St. Bernard, when young, to enter upon a religious and contemplative life, and had joined the brotherhood of Clairvaux. Henry, being a person of very great sanctity, was

[1] Dugdale Monast. Angl. vol. v. p. 286. Cart. ad Fontanense Cœnobium in agro Ebor. fundatum, A.D. 1132. Num. xxvii.

entrusted by St. Bernard with full power to conduct the regulation and visitation of the monastery, which he appears to have done in a most exemplary manner.[1] This then would be another source from which St. Bernard would gain information as to what was going on at York; the course of our history will show us what opinion St. Bernard had of William .in consequence, and what use he made of the information he received.

Celestine II. had no sooner ascended the Apostolic Chair, than St. Bernard, determined to oppose to the uttermost what he believed to be a case of gross irregularity, and if so, of very great injury to the Church at large, addressed the Pope in terms of no common warmth and earnestness. Wholly bent as he was in thoroughly purging the Church of abuses, and of raising amongst the clergy a higher tone both of life and feeling, this was precisely the case in which he would use all his energies and endeavours; and being persuaded of the uncanonical character of the election, and also of the personal unfitness (as he supposed) of the archbishop for the charge, as the mere tool of a monarch who wished to create a party in a Church where he was unpopular, he was determined to get him deposed, and towards this end, he applied at once to the Court of Rome.

It will be remembered, that the conditions on which Innocent II. had given his sanction for

[1] "Henricum de Valle clare Abbatem ad Anglicanas partes transmisit, vices suas tam in ordinatione quam in exequenda visitatione, illi committens."—St. Bern. Ep. 106, also 320 and 321. Op. ed Mabillon.

William's consecration, were, that the Dean of York should swear that the mandate from the king had not superseded, or interfered with the election of the Chapter; he also granted that, in case it was necessary, three fit persons might swear instead of the dean; which we have seen was done at the Council at Winchester, which the dean was not able to attend, on account of the disturbances of William Comyn. We have no means of discovering for certainty whether the dean, had he been able to have attended the council, would have taken the oath or not; but assuming as we do, that William himself knew nothing about the king's mandate, the English synod, as far as we can see, were perfectly justified in considering both his election and consecration valid, after the oath had been taken by a bishop and two abbots as proxies for the dean. St. Bernard, however, considered this a plain proof that the dean *could* not take the oath, and also that William knew this, and had himself connived at the arrangement; and this, together with the fact that his information came from those who, from whatever cause, were professed enemies of William, will account for the very strong terms in which he expresses himself. But before we proceed to the letters of St. Bernard, it may not be amiss to mention a strong argument in favour of William's personal character, and this is the testimony of the monks of Fountains, who, as we shall see hereafter, suffered much from William's appointment, and who therefore must have been impartial in their opinion. They say in one of their documents belonging to the monastery, that

William "was a man of high birth, adorned with many virtues, and in all respects worthy to preside over a cathedral, *if his election had been more canonical.*"[1] Here then there is not a word against him *personally*, but only against the way in which his election was conducted.

Let us now return to St. Bernard. In his first letter to Celestine,[2] he calls upon him to carry out and fulfil the intentions of his predecessor, and tells him that here was a good opportunity for so doing. He declares that the case of the Archbishop of York had been decided by Pope Innocent, and yet that his sentence had not been carried into effect. For though the archbishop had been accused on various grounds, yet that the whole controversy was allowed to rest upon one point which was to be decided by the dean, and he implies that this was at the request of the accused himself. And yet, he continues, what has been the issue? The dean would not swear, and yet William is bishop. He then inveighs against him as "one whose character was low, ill spoken of, one accused by public fame, who had not been cleared of the charges, but rather convicted." He concludes by demanding of the Pope whether his Suffragan Bishops and the rest of the clergy were to receive the Sacraments from, and pay obedience to, such a man, "to one who had been twice thrust into the sanctuary—once by the king, and once by the legate—and who not being able to enter in by the door, had dug an entrance, as the saying is, by

[1] Dugdale Monast. Angl. vol. v. p. 300, Cart. Num. xxvi.
[2] S. Bern. Ep. 235.

a silver spade, through which he had impudently thrust himself."[1]

In no less strong terms is the letter to the Bishops and Cardinals of the Roman Court. And in this letter St. Bernard mentions certain letters which William said he had received from the Pope, but of which St. Bernard says, "Would they had been from the prince of darkness, not from the Prince of the Apostles!"[2]

It is probable that this was the letter giving permission to the dean to have proxies in case he could not attend to take the oath himself; and we may here observe, that the reason the Pope gave the decision he did respecting the oath, was not that those who supported the election denied that the Earl of York had come to the Chapter and recommended William for the vacant see. They did not deny this, but only that he had absolutely commanded the election, as if the king had supreme power in such cases. But after all we cannot arrive at any certainty upon the question; all that we would maintain is this, that William was to all appearances innocent of the charges laid against him, but that his election might have been, indeed probably was, uncanonical. Doubtless St. Bernard supposed he had good grounds for opposing him, and we shall only be following the opinion of Pope Benedict XIV., to whom we shall again refer pre-

[1] "Turpis infamisque persona: publice infamatus nec purgatus, imo et convictus . . . Fodit argenteo, ut aiunt, sarculo, unde impudenter intrusit."—Ep. 236.

[2] "Utinam a principibus tenebrarum, non a principibus Apostolorum."

sently, if we say that, as far as William's personal character was concerned, St. Bernard was mistaken.

Knowing, however, what we do of St. Bernard, and of his immense influence, we cannot be surprised that his opposition was not without its effect upon the Pope. William, after his consecration, petitioned Celestine in the accustomed way for the Pallium,[1] without which he could not exercise the full powers of his office : his opponents however at Rome brought forward many charges against him, and his request was denied : he was commanded to appear in person before the Pope, and to answer for himself.[2] But in the meantime Celestine died, on the 8th of March 1144, and on the 12th of the same month, Lucius II. was consecrated as his successor ; he is described as not being of such an austere disposition as the former Pope. Immediately on his appointment, the Bishop of Winchester petitioned him in favour of his nephew William, and was successful : he met with favour and assistance from Lucius, but not so far as to retain the office of Legate which he had hitherto held. This office was now given to Hicmar (or Ymar), Cardinal Bishop of Tusculum, who had been chosen from the monastery at Cluny, and admitted into the Apostolic college by Pope Innocent II. He was now sent to England as Legate, and bearer of the Pallium for the Archbishop of York. It was on this occasion that William's easy,[3] and, as it would seem,

[1] Gul. Neubrig. lib. i. c. xvii. "Responsales idoneos, pro petendo solemniter Pallio ad Sedem Apostolicam direxisset."

[2] John Hagust. p. 273.

[3] Ibid. p. 274.

dilatory disposition, of which we spoke at the beginning of our history, proved greatly injurious to his own welfare; for through negligence he failed to meet the Legate, at the time and place appointed; occupied perhaps in some trivial and unimportant business compared with the duty of meeting the Pope's messenger and receiving from him what, in those days, was an indispensable badge of his office. It seems, however, probable that Hicmar would not at once have conferred the Pallium, for St. Bernard[1] had written to William, Abbot of Rievaux, at the same time that Hicmar was sent to England, telling him that he had used every possible means to get the archbishop deposed, and that he had suggested to the Legate not to deliver the Pallium, unless the Dean of York would himself take the oath. Be this as it may, so it was, that whilst William was delaying, his friend and patron Lucius died, February 25, 1145, and was succeeded by the friend and disciple of St. Bernard, Eugenius III. The tide had now again turned against William: the Legate was forbidden to confer the Pallium: heavier trials now await him; his opponents were greatly strengthened by the succession of the new Pontiff, and as we shall see, gained their end, and were for the time successful.

[1] Ep. 360.

CHAPTER III

ST. WILLIAM DEPOSED

POPE Lucius, as we have seen, died on the 25th of February 1145, and on the 24th of the following month, Bernard of Pisa, Abbot of the monastery of St. Anastasius, at Rome, was consecrated as his successor, under the title of Eugenius III. The circumstances of his election are too curious to be omitted. He was a monk of Clairvaux, and had been sent five years before by St. Bernard to found the monastery just mentioned. Even this office seemed far too much for him, for he was a man of inferior abilities, and of no education : his duties at Clairvaux had been "to take care of the stove, and to make a fire for the monks, who from being but thinly clad, were generally pierced with cold after the matin service."[1] Whilst Abbot at Rome, he encountered great difficulties and vexations from the slander and calumnies of a false brother; so much so, that he entreated St. Bernard to allow him to return to Clairvaux, "for that he was in danger of becoming the laughing-stock of the whole city."[2] It was this weak and humble monk, who

[1] Ann. Cist. p. 393, n. 10. Vie de St. Bern. par Ratisbonne, vol. ii. pp. 59, 60.

[2] Ep. 343, 344, inter Ep. S. Bern. ed. Mabillon.

belonged neither to the episcopal order nor to the college of Cardinals, and who was unequal to manage a small monastery, that found himself chosen to be the head of the whole Church. And in him were verified most fully the words of St. Paul, that God had chosen the weak things of the world to confound the strong, for Eugenius after his election became quite another person, so that every one was astonished at his wisdom and the firmness of his conduct. This will account for the great influence which St. Bernard had over Eugenius, and for the unwillingness the latter displayed to go against the wishes and advice of such a counsellor.

At this time the Cistercian order began to increase in power and influence,[1] and especially under the Pontificate of Eugenius, who himself was, as we have seen, the disciple of St. Bernard; and it seems probable that this, among other circumstances, gave a unity of purpose to the proceedings which were now to be taken against William. We may also here remark in passing, that the Cistercians, with St. Bernard at their head, were the great reformers of the day; that is, they had both attempted, and with success too, to restore their order to its ancient system of strictness and discipline, and were now endeavouring to do the same for the Church at large. Their life was one continued protest against abuses and lax practices, which then so sullied the beauty of the Church, and of these, the one against which they lifted up

[1] Gervasii Chronicon, ap. Twysden, p. 1361.

their voice incessantly, was simony. This was the crime which, notwithstanding the saintly opposition which the great Gregory VII. had made against it, was still disgracing the Church of Christ. How to overcome it was still one of the most anxious and interesting questions to all those who had the Church's welfare at heart, and to none was it more full of anxiety and care than to St. Bernard. Hence then his determined opposition to William, hence his expressions of indignation and disgust; for it must be allowed that however free from the taunts of this crying sin William might have been, still he was in the eyes of such as St. Bernard the representative of the simoniacal party. He was mixed up with its supporters; his friends, alas! and patrons, were confessedly on the side of the world, and he himself had yet to learn "that if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." But to return. William's opponents soon perceived that there would be little difficulty in gaining the Pope over to their side; and therefore, no sooner was Eugenius elected, than the case of the archbishop was brought before him. Henry Murdach now appears foremost in opposing him;[1] he was doubtless well acquainted with Eugenius, and on the strength of this, he urged his complaints against William with great confidence. Their first step was to prevail on the Pope to recall the Legate Hicmar, and to forbid his giving the Pallium to William.

In 1146, William beginning, as we may suppose,

[1] "Plurimum præsumens sibi de gratiâ Apostolici."

to realise the disadvantages of his position, determined to petition the Pope in person for the Pallium, and for that purpose went to Rome. Here he found the Roman Senate in favour of his cause; but this was as nothing while he had St. Bernard still against him, who hearing that he was at Rome, wrote at once to Eugenius in terms of far greater indignation and vehemence than those which he had used to Celestine.[1] Eugenius was perplexed; he dreaded—and well he might—to go against St. Bernard, and yet, as it would seem, it did not appear clear to him how to carry out into effect the wishes of his adviser. St. Bernard, on the other hand, declared that though importunate, he yet had a fair excuse; he complains that all the world was taking him for Pope, and every one consulting him on their own affairs. The righteousness of the cause he now has in hand excuses his importunity. His pen was again directed against that idol of York "idolum Eboracense," and this from necessity, for he had often aimed at it with the same weapon, but had not yet cast it down. He tells the Pope that he alone had the power of deposing a bishop, and that he alone would be to blame if this crime which must be punished is not so, and that too with the severity it deserves. He leaves it to his own conscience to decide, with what violence the offence of him of York should be not struck down so much, as blasted, as it were, with lightning;[2] he tells him that the reason it had not been done

[1] Ep. 238, 239.

[2] "Non dico ferienda, sed fulminanda."

so before, was that he might have the doing of it, that the Church of God over which he presided by Divine authority might see in this case the fervour of his zeal, and the power and wisdom of his soul, and that all the people might fear the Priest of the Lord when they heard that the wisdom of God was with him for executing judgment.

How could Eugenius resist such arguments as these, coming as they did from one to whom he had so lately been in the habit of paying the most unquestioning obedience? Supreme though he was, and responsible to no man, he had not forgotten the ties which bound him to St. Bernard; now more than ever would he seek from him support and counsel. In the present instance St. Bernard was decided—he was rarely mistaken—how could he oppose such an one? No—he was in a great strait, and dreading on the one hand to neglect St. Bernard's counsel, and being unwilling on the other to go counter to the wishes and opinions of the Roman College, he took as it were a middle course, and decreed that until the Dean of York, now Bishop of Durham, should himself take the oath required of him by Pope Innocent, William must cease to exercise the office of bishop. This was the answer he sent to St. Bernard, and at the same time he wrote to the Bishop of Durham, adjuring him to declare the truth openly and without reserve. The bishop now seems to have given his opinion against the archbishop's election, and to have acknowledged that it was uncanonical; and we cannot but

wonder at the course he had taken: by his duplicity he had allowed three persons to swear to what they could not but believe was true, he the while being conscious of the contrary: he had openly professed regard for William, who, as we have seen, was present when he was enthroned, and now, to suit his own purposes, he found it convenient to declare all he knew about the matter: but why not have done so at once? to what profit was this duplicity and unfairness? No words of ours are necessary to expose this unprincipled proceeding, the facts themselves are quite sufficient to convict the bishop of most unchristian and unmanly conduct. St. Bernard, depending on this declaration, and as was reasonable, more anxious than ever to see the irregularity corrected, addressed a second letter to Eugenius,[1] and demands how much longer the land was to be burdened, and the fruit choked up by this useless branch? the time was come for its amputation; for the very man on whom it trusted had declared that it must not be pruned but cut away.[2] He says that letters[3] from the Bishop of Durham to the Pope's Legate were in existence, in which the fact of intrusion is plainly avowed, and the election denied. And thus his defender, as he supposed, has turned out to be his accuser. It was not his part (St. Bernard's) to dictate in what way (for there seemed to be more ways than one)

[1] Ep. 240.

[2] "Non purgatione, sed amputatione opus esse."

[3] It is probable that the letters were written at the time that Hicmar was in England.

the offender must be deposed. It matters little how the unfruitful tree falls, if only it doth fall. As to what he (William) says about his own private letters respecting the oath, it is either true or false: if true, then the Pope was the guilty person; but God forbid that such duplicity as this be imputed to so great a man: "for Innocent," continues St. Bernard, "was of that character, that if he were able now to answer for himself, he would say, 'Openly did I give my sentence against thee, and in secret have I spoken nothing.'"

But whatever be the truth of the matter, for it is impossible to come to any *exact* knowledge of the real state of the question, St. Bernard, as was likely, prevailed; and William perceiving at length that his cause was hopeless, and that both his letters which he said he had received from Pope Innocent were accused of being counterfeit, and also that the Bishop of Durham, whom he had supposed was his friend, had now deserted him, if not betrayed him, finding all his endeavours useless, left Rome and retired to Sicily,[1] Roger the king of that island being his kinsman. Here he stayed for some time with one Robert, an Englishman of Salisbury, the king's Chancellor: afterwards he returned to England; but we must here leave him for a while, to follow up the events which took place both in England and France after the Pope's decision respecting him.

The news of the Pope's decision respecting the archbishop had no sooner arrived in England, than

[1] John Hagust. p. 275.

the greatest indignation and confusion prevailed at York and in the neighbourhood.[1] The king's party were of course offended beyond measure, and the supporters of Mathilda, who had hitherto strained every nerve for the deposition of William, were now exulting in all the joy of having gained their point. Their exultation only increased the rage of their opponents; at length the king's adherents, and amongst them some of William's own kinsmen, being no longer able to contain their indignation, formed a conspiracy against Henry Murdach, whom they considered to have been the chief cause of the archbishop's disgrace.[2] They attacked the Abbey of Fountains in a large body, with drawn swords, which they hoped to bedew in the blood of the holy abbot. Their rage had so passed all control, that they feared not to profane the sacred abbey itself:[3] with impious and sacrilegious hands they tore down the gates, and entered the very sanctuary: but when he, for whose blood they thirsted, was not to be found, they rushed through the adjacent buildings and offices, laying everything waste, and carrying off whatever was valuable; and to finish their work of impiety, they set fire to the building, erected at so much labour and expense, and soon reduced it to a mass of ashes. At a short distance off stood the holy brotherhood, and beheld in dismay and anguish their house and Church crumbling and sinking into ashes before the devouring flames. One little oratory, with its

[1] Godwin de Præsulibus, vol. ii. p. 250. Ed. fol.
[2] Dugdale Monast. Angl. vol. v. p. 286, Cart. Num. xxxvi.
[3] John Hagust. ubi sup.

adjacent offices, remained to them not quite consumed, like a brand snatched from the fire. Here at the foot of the altar lay prostrate the abbot, pouring forth in prayer his soul to God. His prayers were heard, for here, while the hand of the destroyer was at work, he lay unseen, unhurt, "safe under the defence of the Most High, and abiding under the shadow of the Almighty." The destroyers supposing that he was not at Fountains, at length departed, "laden," as the monkish writer says, "not with much money, but with much damnation.[1] They lived not long to rejoice in their impious deed: they were struck with the hand of God, and were cut off almost immediately in their sins, some of them dying of consumption, some by drowning, and some were struck with madness; all of them in a short time perished in various ways, and almost all unreconciled to God." Meanwhile the abbot and monks, taking courage and comfort from above, set themselves vigorously to work to rebuild the abbey and monastery, and as it is written, "the bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones,"[2] so was it with the Abbey of Fountains: holy and faithful men of the neighbourhood gave their assistance, and in a short time the new fabric rose more beautiful and glorious than the former.

This shameful proceeding gave the finishing stroke, as it were, to William's case: an account of it was straightway sent to Rome, and though the archbishop was in no way concerned in it,[3] we

[1] "Parum quidem pecuniæ sed plurimum damnationis."
[2] Isaiah ix. 10.
[3] Gul. Neubrig. lib. i. c. xvii.

cannot be surprised that the Pope should suppose he was, and consequently that he was now determined to punish him with the greatest severity; and for this purpose he endeavoured, but without success, to seize him.[1]

In the year 1147, which, according to the French and English reckoning of those times, was still current, Easter falling on the 11th of April, but according to our present calculation, in the beginning of 1148, Eugenius left Rome and came into France for the purpose of presiding at a council of the Gallican and Anglican bishops. The prelates of both countries were commanded to appear, and in the middle of Lent Eugenius held the great Council of Rheims.[2] We may here mention a fact connected with this council, which will illustrate the party spirit which was at that time existing in England, even between one bishop and another. Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury, had received the Pope's command to attend the council, and had accordingly asked, but could not obtain, the king's permission to go. Inasmuch, however, as he feared God more than the king, he started, and with very great difficulty arrived in France. For in order to prevent his departure, the king had ordered all the seaports to be narrowly watched and guarded. This was done at the suggestion of Henry, the Bishop of Winchester, who for some time previously to this had been on bad terms with the archbishop. The origin of the ill-will between them seems to have arisen from Henry's disappoint-

[1] John Hagust. ubi sup.; see also Ep. 252, St. Bern.
[2] Gervasii Chronicon, p. 1363.

ment at not having been promoted to the See of Canterbury, which, says the Canterbury historian, he fully expected.[1] They then had disputes concerning the rights and privileges of their respective offices and jurisdiction. The archbishop accused Henry of abusing his power as Legate, and had petitioned Pope Celestine to remove him from his office.[2] On the present occasion, Henry had so contrived, that if the archbishop left the country he should be proscribed by the king, whereas, if he did not attend the council he would be suspended, if not deposed, for contempt of the Pope. Theobald, however, found means to embark, and in a small shattered bark reached, after great danger, the French shore, and made his appearance at the council. The Pope received him with great joy and honour, and commended him for his zealous and fearless conduct. On his return from France, Stephen sentenced him to banishment, for which the whole kingdom was put under an interdict by command of the Pope.[3] There were present also at the council those of the clergy of York who were opposed to William, together with Henry Murdach. They again laid their complaints before the Pope, and declared that William had not been canonically elected, or lawfully consecrated, but had been thrust in by the king's authority, "auctoritate regia intrusum." Whereupon Alberic,

[1] Gervasii Chronicon, an. 1138, p. 1348.

[2] Vid. Gervasii Act. Pontif. Cantuar., p. 1665, et Step. Birchington vitæ Archiep. Cantuar. Anglia Sacra, pars i. p. 7.

[3] Vid. Chronica W. Thorn, A.D. 1148, ap. Twysden, p. 1807, et Gervasius, p. 1363.

Bishop of Ostia, pronounced the sentence of the Pope in the following words:[1] "We decree, by the authority of the Pope, that William, Archbishop of York, be deposed from the Pontificate, because Stephen, King of England, nominated him before the canonical election had taken place." We may here remark, that here for the first time the legality of his consecration came into question, and the probable reason for its not being considered legal was the non-consent of the Archbishop of Canterbury, which was mentioned above.

The See of York was now again vacant, and Eugenius immediately addressed letters to the Bishop of Durham and the Chapter of York, commanding them, within forty days after the receipt of the letters, to elect in the room of William a learned, discreet, and religious person. In obedience to this command, the superior clergy of the Cathedral and Diocese of York met on the eve of the festival of St. James the Apostle, in the Church of St. Martin, in the suburb of Richmond,[2] to choose a fit person to fill the vacant See; after much deliberation the majority chose Hylarius, Bishop of Chichester; the rest of the Chapter, Henry Murdach, Abbot of Fountains.[3] The issue of their meeting was reported to Eugenius, in the ensuing winter, when he confirmed the election of Henry Murdach, and consecrated him with his own hands at Treves, on the second Sunday in Advent, in the octave of St.

[1] Gervasius, ubi sup.

[2] "In suburbium de Richemund."

[3] Gervasius ubi sup. John Hagust. p. 276; Dugdale, Monast. Angl., vol. v. p. 286, Cart. Num. xxxvii.

Andrew. Henry, now archbishop, and duly invested with the Pallium, set out on his journey for England, little imagining the kind of reception that awaited him.[1] William had been dearly beloved by the common people of York, and, as we think, deservedly so, for his exceeding benevolence to them, and for the holiness of his life, and now they could ill endure the presence of one whom they knew had been one of the main instruments in getting him deposed. They were not likely to enter into questions about the legality of his election ; all they knew or cared for was, that William had been a good archbishop and friend to them, and now he was taken away from them, and, as they supposed, on unjust grounds, and another, one of his very enemies, sent to them, in his stead : this was more than they could endure, and so, swayed entirely by their feelings, they set themselves at once with all their might against the new archbishop, and having laid their plans, they prevented his entrance into York. Stephen, too, was highly indignant at the treatment of his nephew, and by way of revenge required Henry to take some unusual oath, which he refused to do ; consequently the king's party was added to his opponents. The citizens remained firm, and drove him from the city ; and the greatest confusion now prevailed. The archbishop anathematised the insurgents,[2] and laid them under an interdict. The Cathedral was closed, the sacred rites discontinued, and the insurrection spread through the whole province, but especially in the

[1] Godwin de Præsul. Angl., vol. ii. p. 250, fol. ed.
[2] John Hagust. p. 277. Godwin, ubi sup.

city, where things arrived at such a pitch, that an archdeacon,[1] a friend of the archbishop's, was murdered. Meanwhile Henry retired to Ripon, where he remained for several years, during the whole of which time the disturbances at York never ceased. The king's soldiers were continually persecuting those who had any share in William's deposition.[2] Eustace, King Stephen's son, hearing that the services of the Church were discontinued, appeared at York at the head of a body of troops, and commanded the clergy, in spite of the archbishop's anathema, to resume them, and perform them in the accustomed manner; and he severely punished the people of Beverley for having received and afforded protection to the archbishop.

Thus, instead of the peaceful quiet and repose of Fountains, Henry for the first three years of his episcopate met with nothing but difficulties and vexations. The displeasure of his sovereign, the perplexity and distraction of the few that still remained faithful to him, the hatred of his citizens, and the continual plottings and conspiracies of his adversaries, were but a sorry exchange for a life of prayer and contemplation, for the round of holy services, and the society of those who were as his own children in love and affection for him. It seems, however, that he repined not at what he acknowledged to be the will of God, but remaining quietly at Ripon, he at length was recompensed for all his sufferings; the malice of his enemies gave way before his prudence, his meekness overcame

[1] Godwin, p. 251.

[2] John Hagust. p. 278, et Gul. Neub. lib. i. c. xvii.

their fury, and even the indignation and opposition of the king was at length compelled to yield to his forbearance and Christian patience. The circumstances we do not know: but so it was, strange as it may appear, that in 1151, the king was reconciled to him, and he was at last received by the people of York, and enthroned with great splendour in the Cathedral on the Festival of the Conversion of St. Paul.[1] The following Easter he celebrated with Pope Eugenius at Rome. He governed his diocese with great zeal and strictness, and was himself a bright example of purity and holiness of life. The first thing we find him doing, was to restore at his own expense the privileges attached to certain dignities, freedoms and immunities, belonging to the Cathedral of York,[2] which William had sold to defray the expenses of his continual journeys to Rome.[3] This is a blemish in William's character, which we would only notice in such a manner as it is becoming to speak of the imperfections of a saint; we will not stop to dwell on it, but leaving Archbishop Henry in the prudent and well-ordered government of his diocese, we will return to William, now no longer surrounded with the pomp and splendour of the episcopate, but clothed in the humble garb of a penitent, and wholly taken up with sorrowing for the failings of his past life, and doubtless amongst them for that which we have just mentioned.

[1] Dugdale, ubi sup. Godwin, ubi sup. John Hagust. p. 279.
[2] "Privilegia dignitatum, libertatum, immunitatum."
[3] John Hagust. ubi sup.

CHAPTER IV

ST. WILLIAM IN PENITENCE

We have now arrived at the most interesting, as well as the most edifying part of William's history. Hitherto we have beheld him mixed up more or less with the world and with worldly ways; living in king's houses, and clothed in soft apparel, patronised by the rulers of the earth, but opposed by one of the chiefest of God's saints: himself meanwhile endeavouring to retain the position to which he had been raised, kind indeed, and benevolent to the poor, courteous, and possessed of many amiable qualities, but yet wanting in the chief characteristics which separate the saint from the mere ordinary, and if we may so say, the everyday religious man. Believing nevertheless, as we do, that William was really innocent of the *crimes* brought against him, and that he was what the world would call a good amiable man, still all will allow, that what we have as yet seen of his character is not of that standard and value as would warrant us in believing that he shared the assembly of those glorious beings whose memories are cherished by the Church with so much love and veneration. As yet he has not given any sign of his future destiny: making the very most of him as we may, still those

wonderful, unearthly, and saint-like qualities, which in technical language are called "heroic virtue," and which the Church requires as an indispensable requisite, before she decides whether one departed is to be venerated as a saint, and which, in greater or less degrees, has always shone forth in the saints of Holy Church, has not yet been seen in William. How, then, it may be asked, did he become fit to be inscribed in the Church's catalogue of saints? The answer to this question will best be given by continuing our account of him; yet it may be briefly stated, that it was through the grace of penitence. He exchanged the golden mitre and the purple robe for the cowl and serge; the bed of down, and tapestried chamber, for the pallet, and the dark and cold and lonely cell; the sounds of joy and laughter, for the tears and groans of a broken and contrite heart. And thus, incomprehensible and visionary as it may seem to the mere man of sense, he prepared himself to be a meet recipient for that glorious crown that fadeth not away.

After having spent some time in Sicily, William returned to England, and at once gave evident proof that his mind was made up as to his future course and mode of life. His uncle, the Bishop of Winchester, still the man of the world, and therefore heedless of the Pope's decision respecting his nephew, received him at Winchester, as though he were still archbishop, with much pomp and splendour. He offered him one of his mansions, and commanded that all his own retainers and household should pay him the same deference as before; but William at once perceived the im-

propriety of such a course, and, moreover, was both unfit and unwilling to receive such attentions. He rejected all the offers of his uncle, and instead of a palace and many servants, instead of luxury and comfort, he chose out as his abode some manor belonging to his uncle, near the monastery of Winchester, where he resided, though most of his time was spent in the society of the monks, in which he took the greatest delight.[1] Here his life was exemplary; not a murmur or complaint ever escaped his lips; nor was he ever heard to speak against his enemies, and from those who did speak against them he would always turn away; diligent beyond the rest of his companions, he was constantly employed in study and reading, and yet was instant and persevering in prayer. In short, to quote the words of an old historian, "He wished to do penance for his past sins, and to extinguish by the abundance of his tears the avenging punishment of future fire."[2]

"And thus," to quote again another old writer,[3] "was he wholly changed into another man." How much does this last short sentence imply! How do the words "wholly changed" reveal to us the part of his history now under review!—"changed into another man," and this by the grace of penitence, by the practice of true and heartfelt sorrow and contrition. The worldly man may laugh at this; he, indeed, had he been William's adviser, would have bade him lead a very different

[1] Vid. Wharton, Anglia Sacra, pars i. p. 300, et Harpsfeldii, Hist. Eccl. Angl. p. 397.

[2] Bromton, p. 1041.

[3] John Hagust. p. 276.

life ; he would have had him make the best of it ; he would have said, " Eat, drink, and be merry." But William, frail and imperfect as he was, had not so learned Christ. He felt and acknowledged that his disgrace was not sent him for nought ; he received it as the furnace of affliction in which he was to be tried, and purified of all earthly dross and alloy, and receiving it as such, he could not but come forth from it an altered man. He had not read in vain of her who had sinned greatly, but who loved much, and therefore was forgiven ; of her whose tears bedewed her Saviour's feet, and washed away a load of guilt. Now would the Holy Hymns, in which he had so often joined, perhaps without much thought, when the Church in solemn festival assembles to honour her memory, come vividly before him, and as he knelt before the altar of his God, would he pray that he might be cleansed as Mary Magdalene, and become a devoted follower of his Lord. And if, in the severe and piercing examination of his past life, the thought perchance should come across him that he too had denied his Saviour, yet would he recall to mind that wondrous look upon the fallen Apostle, that never-to-be-forgotten look which availed to call him, unmindful of his promises, and the deserter of his Lord, back to a faithful and devoted service, and made him fit to become the bearer of the keys of Heaven, the foundation of the Church, the shepherd of the sheep. Such thoughts as these, as they flashed before the contrite penitent, could not but kindle a cheering ray of hope that even yet he might become a true and faithful servant of the Cross, and

so he fainted not; for five long years he continued at the peaceful monastery, steadfast in the exercise of penance; constant and unwearied in prayers, and fastings, and nightly vigils, in the holy round of fast and festival, and sacred seasons, hoping for nothing, and desiring nothing but the forgiveness of his past sins, and grace to serve his Lord faithfully for the future. And thus in him, as in the holy David and the blessed St. Peter, and in the loving St. Mary Magdalene, and in the robber on the Cross, and in the multitude of those who from the penitent have risen to the Saint, do we behold the merciful provisions of the Gospel in the exceeding grace of penitence. High and unspeakable as are the privileges and blessings in store, both here and hereafter, for those who have never sullied by wilful sin the purity of their baptismal robe, those on whose foreheads the holy angels still behold the wondrous sign in all its infant brightness, far beyond all comparison as is their condition while on earth, and glorious as will be their reward hereafter, yet we cannot too highly prize, or ever be too thankful for, the hope held out to penitents. The tears which gush from the really broken and contrite heart, unite in wonderful co-operation with the blood of the Holy Lamb, to wash, as we may say, once more the sinful soul; and though we dare not presume on this precious means of grace, still the penitent may cheer himself as he passes on his mournful and rugged path with the hope that if he but endure to the end, he may yet be permitted to join with the Church triumphant in their hymns of everlasting praise, with those who have washed

their robes in the blood of the Lamb, and have through much tribulation entered into the kingdom of God. That such was William's blessedness, we shall give the grounds for believing by-and-by.

But it is now time for us to leave the reflections which William's penitential life at Winchester suggested, and to pass on to the remainder of his history. It was in the latter end of the year 1148 that St. William entered upon his life of penitence. In the middle of 1153, into which year we must now introduce the reader, events took place which brought him forth from his solitude, to appear once more on the scene of active life. Within a few months of each other, Pope Eugenius, St. Bernard, and Henry Murdach departed this life.[1] The latter died at Beverley, and was buried in the Cathedral at York; in the words of one of the monks of Fountains, "They loved each other mutually in their lives, and in death they were not divided; leaders of the Lord's flock, pillars of the house of God, lights of the world."[2] In the room of Eugenius, one of the cardinals who had been an earnest supporter of William when his cause was heard at Rome, was elected Pope, under the title of Anastasius IV. As soon as the intelligence of the death of Eugenius and St. Bernard had reached England, William's friends, considering that now that two of his chief opponents were no more, something might be done towards his restoration, urged upon him the duty of claiming his former

[1] Eugenius, July 8; St. Bernard, August 20; Henry Murdach, October 14.—John Hagust. p. 282 (his history ends here).

[2] Dugdale, ubi sup. Cart. Num. 41.

position.[1] Yielding to their entreaties, he left Winchester, and went immediately to Rome, where he presented himself before his former patron, Anastasius, not complaining, or finding fault with the sentence passed upon him, but humbly imploring pity, and, as we may suppose, requesting the Pope to take his case into consideration. While he was at Rome, messengers arrived from England with the news of the death of the Archbishop of York.[2] These same messengers conducted William back at once to York, where on his arrival he found that he had been elected again by the majority, and the most worthy part of the Chapter.[3] Immediately upon his re-election, he returned, according to one historian,[4] to Rome, where he was honourably received by Hugh, who had just been consecrated Bishop of Durham, in the room of William de St. Barbara, on the Vigil of St. Thomas (December 20), and who greatly advanced his cause before the Pope and Cardinals. This writer relates that William arrived in Rome on the third day after Hugh's consecration (December 23). Another, and perhaps more trustworthy writer,[5] gives a different account, and says that the Bishop of Durham had left Rome before William's second arrival there, and while his cause was still pending. But however this may be, it is certain that Anastasius still maintained his favourable opinion of William, and was rejoiced to find that he had again been elected

[1] Godwin, p. 231. Bromton, p. 1041.
[2] Vid. Acta SS. vita. S. Gul. Jun. viii. sec. 6, 28.
[3] Bromton, p. 1041. [4] Gervasius, p. 1375.
[5] Gul. Neub. lib. ii. cap. xxvi.

by the Chapter. He confirmed most gladly their election, and presented William with the Pallium, which, as we have seen, he had never yet obtained. The Pope and Cardinals treated him with the greatest kindness, commiserating his old age and adverse circumstances;[1] one Cardinal especially, of the name of Gregory,[2] described as "a man of great ability and most profound acuteness," investigated his case with much interest. And now, restored to his former high position, and receiving from the Holy Pontiff the favour and protection of his blessing, William set out once more for England. He arrived at Winchester[3] on Holy Saturday (April 3, 1154), where, having celebrated the Easter Festival, he pursued his journey (April 13, "post Albas") and hastened to reach his own city."[4]

His journey from Rome to England is remarkable for the effect he produced upon the inhabitants of the places through which he passed; they were struck with the purity and heavenly character of his whole demeanour and conversation. The following anecdote, which is told of him when he arrived at Canterbury, will show that an opinion of his sanctity must have been growing up now for some time, and that it had spread far and wide, abroad as well as at home. In those days, when the blessed effects of penance and the discipline of the Church were acknowledged by all true

[1] "Miserante canos."
[2] As to who this Gregory was, vid. Acta SS. ubi sup.
[3] Bromton, p. 1041; Polydore Vergil, lib. xii. p. 210.
[4] Gervasius, ubi sup.

Christians, men would be as it were on the look-out to hear of or see those who had given themselves up to the practice of sincere repentance, as persons for whom the Lord had done great things, whom only to see was a great privilege, and a most sure means of self-improvement. Thus we may imagine the fame of William's life at Winchester had reached the ears of all earnest and religious men, and they naturally longed to see him, not as it would be in these days, to criticise or ridicule, or to pronounce him a wild enthusiast and fanatic, who knew not the spirit of the Gospel, but to gaze upon him with devotion and reverence, if haply they might gain somewhat of his spirit, and receive from his holy lips words of comfort and encouragement. The world puts forward her heroes and men of science, her philosophers and politicians, and the children of the world fall down before them and pay them homage, and in like manner the Church has those amongst her children whose achievements surpass, in measure infinite, those of hero or philosopher; those who have wrestled against the unseen world, and have come forth victorious; those who have found out the science of the heart and conscience, who can order and regulate the life of the hidden man—these are they, even the Saints in all ages, whom true believers long to see, in whose presence they joy to dwell, and with whom to hold communion after their earthly course is finished is one of their greatest privileges and delights. This may serve to give importance to the otherwise ordinary story in question, that as soon as William arrived at Canterbury, Roger, the Archdeacon, who had been

exceedingly desirous of seeing him, visited him, with feelings of the highest reverence and devotion, and on his taking his departure, William said, in the hearing of those who stood by, "That man will be my successor"—which really came to pass.[1]

On leaving Canterbury, William, as we have already mentioned, passed a few days at Winchester, and thence proceeded straight to York, where he arrived on the Sunday before the Feast of the Ascension, May 8, 1154. There, however, a new sort of opposition awaited him. His old enemies were by God's grace indeed his friends; they had opposed him in the days of his splendour, because a king had endeavoured to force him upon the Church of Christ, and because he was identified with a secular party, headed by a worldly prelate, by whose means Theobald, the Primate of England, had become an exile. Now the scene had changed; he had come back indeed with the rich robes which he had worn of old, but his heart and his treasure were now in heaven; St. Bernard was there also; but there remained on earth the other section of his opponents. None must be startled by their virulent and bitter hatred. The state of the higher secular clergy of the age was miserable; an author of the time declares that the greater number of the bishops were mere military prelates; one alone he mentions as a courageous asserter of the rights of the Church, the holy Bishop of Hereford.[2] This account will prepare us for the depravity of a portion of the cathedral clergy. The party in York who were still

[1] Stubbs, p. 1722. Bromton et Gul. Neub.

[2] Gesta Stephani ap. Duchesne, Hist. Norm. Script.

opposed to him, headed by Osbert, the Archdeacon, his old enemy, and by the Dean of the Cathedral,[1] endeavoured to prevent his entrance into the city, and appealed to the authorities of the Chapter against him. He proceeded, however, notwithstanding this attempted opposition, and was received with much solemnity and very great rejoicings, both by the clergy and people. His opponents then attempted to gain their point by applying to Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury, who at this time held the office of Legate, but their attempts proved fruitless.

His entrance into York was marked by a very wonderful occurrence,[2] which tended in no small degree to exalt him in the eyes of the people, who were already devotedly attached to him. The whole city had come out to welcome the archbishop, and as they returned, and William was preceding them, the impetuous multitude rushed headlong on to an old wooden bridge,[3] built over the river Ouse, which runs by the city of York, and over which they had to cross to get back again into the city. William, at the head of the crowd, had passed over the bridge, but as the people were upon it, the piers gave way, from the immense pressure, and the mass of the people, which consisted of a great number of women and children, were carried away into the stream. Fearful must have been the sight; universal destruction seemed inevitable. William was soon aware of what had

[1] Gul. Neub. ubi sup.
[2] Bromton, p. 1041. Stubbs, p. 1722. Polydore Vergil, ubi sup.
[3] Drake's Antiq. of York, bk. ii. ch. i. p. 418.

taken place; he stopped, and turning himself towards the river, made the sign of the Cross over the drowning multitude, and bursting into tears, he prayed fervently that Almighty God would not permit so many lives to be cut off on his account. His prayers were heard, for not a single soul perished.[1]

William entered York amidst the most rapturous rejoicings of the people, and began at once to look into the affairs of his diocese, which he governed with great moderation and mildness. One of the first things he did was to visit the Abbey of Fountains; for he had promised at the command of the Pope, to make full restitution to the abbey and its inmates for the injuries and losses they had received on his account,[2] and that he would take the place and its inhabitants under his especial pastoral superintendence, and would treat them with the most paternal affection. Doubtless he would have performed his promise faithfully, had time been allowed him. He went, however, to Fountains in great humility, and promised to make entire satisfaction to the brotherhood. He confirmed them in all the possessions with which his predecessors had endowed the abbey, and having given to every one the kiss of peace, he returned for the last time to York, where, in a few days, he was removed suddenly from the world, and translated to regions of blissful peace and quiet. The account of his death

[1] A chapel was built upon this bridge, dedicated to St. William, and which was standing until the Reformation.—Drake, bk. i. chap. vii. p. 235.

[2] Dugdale Monast. Angl., vol. v. p. 303. Cart. Num. xlii.

is related with great simplicity by one of the old York chroniclers,[1] as follows: "Shortly afterwards the Holy Prelate William prepared himself solemnly to celebrate the Feast of the Holy Trinity, that by the taking of the Heavenly Bread he might offer himself as an acceptable service to the One God in Trinity (uni et trino Deo). Having finished the mysteries of this great solemnity, he was suddenly seized with severe sickness; he returned to his palace, and gave orders that an abundant feast should be set before his guests. While they were feasting in great splendour, the Blessed Father retired to his chamber, and there foretold to his attendants by the spirit of prophecy the day of his decease. For eight days he continued worn out by a violent fever; he permitted none but the hand of an heavenly physician to administer any remedies to him. On the ninth day of his illness, and the thirtieth from his arrival in York, on the 8th day of June, in the year 1154, and the thirtieth year of King Stephen's reign, having bade farewell to his brethren, he finished his earthly life in his palace at York, about to receive from the Lord an eternal mansion. He was buried in the Church of St. Peter; in which place most salutiferous oil flowed from his remains, by which Almighty God was pleased to work through his merits many miracles on the sick."

This is indeed the death of the righteous, which all would envy. It must not however be concealed that a mystery hung over the deathbed of St.

[1] Stubbs, ubi sup.

William. A report at the time prevailed in England that he died by poison, put into the sacred chalice by his inveterate enemies.[1] The idea is most revolting, for though his gentle spirit passed away in peace, the notion that such wickedness should have been upon the earth is very dreadful. At this distance of time when we look upon the evidence dispassionately, the report seems on the whole to have been false; but in the first burst of grief after his death, it was generally believed: the mention of it even occurs in one of the hymns which were sung in his honour. This proves at all events the idea which men had of the terrible rancour and wickedness of his enemies in the Chapter. Even some of those who attended on his deathbed, as will appear, believed it so far as judicially to accuse Osbert the Archdeacon. A contemporary writer,[2] however, of great credit, examined thoroughly the whole affair, and his conclusion was that the report was false. He represents it as a mere conjecture, which nevertheless the common people, ever prone to terrible stories, soon spread abroad as an undoubted fact. Some time after St. William's death, when the report still prevailed, the writer above mentioned examined with solemn adjurations an old monk of Rievaux, who had been on terms of great intimacy with the Canons of York, and also with the archbishop himself. He was at this time

[1] Hoveden, Script. post Bed. p. 490, says, "post perceptionem Eucharistiæ *infra ablutiones* liquore lethali extinctus est." This would imply not that he was poisoned in receiving the Blood of the Lord in the Holy Eucharist, but that poison was put into the water with which the priest rinses the sacred chalice, and which he drinks.

[2] William of Newbridge, lib. ii. c. 26.

of a great age, suffering from severe sickness, and very near his end: he solemnly declared that it was a mere false report, for that he was present himself at the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, and that it was quite impossible that any enemy could have had the opportunity of committing such a deed. He also declared that it was untrue that St. William, when his attendants supposed he had been poisoned, refused to take an antidote,[1] for he knew well from divine authority that God was not to be tempted. The same writer asserts that he heard one Symphorianus, a cleric, who was St. William's constant companion, and who had waited on him with the greatest devotion during his illness, declare that at the persuasion of his friends, St. William took an antidote, and also that the chief reason why they supposed he had been poisoned was, that his teeth, which were naturally very white, turned quite black during his last moments, but that the physicians laughed at such a notion, as it frequently happened with dying persons that their teeth turned black at the last. The only thing which weakens William of Newbridge's testimony is that there is a letter from John of Salisbury[2] to Pope Alexander III., respecting the trial of Osbert the Archdeacon, for the murder of St. William, in which this same Symphorianus appears as the accuser. Osbert claiming to be tried in an ecclesiastical instead of a civil court, King Stephen refused to allow it. The case was delayed to the reign of

[1] That he did refuse it is asserted by Alberic.—Historiens de France, vol. 13, p. 698.

[2] V. Joann. Sarisb. Ep. 108, 110, 111, 122, inter Ep. Papæ Silvest. ii.

Henry II., who with difficulty consented. On the day of the trial, as far as can be made out, Osbert failed to establish his innocence by compurgation, the ordinary mode of inquest—that is, he could not muster a sufficient number of men to swear that they believed him innocent; on which he appealed to Rome. What became of the cause we have not been able to discover, though perhaps some unpublished records may some day throw light upon it. On the point in question, however, it may be observed, that this account of Symphorianus does not contradict the facts which William of Newbridge professes to have heard from him; it only proves that he drew a different conclusion from them. This again strengthens William's testimony, for it shows that he took his premises from a person who was biassed the other way. On the whole, his unprejudiced opinion inclines us strongly to believe that the horrible crime existed only in imagination.

CHAPTER V

ST. WILLIAM IN THE CALENDAR

WILLIAM'S death was deeply felt by the people of York. From first to last, in his prosperity and in his adversity, as Treasurer, as an exile from them, as their bishop he had always been greatly beloved. He had been to them a father indeed, and sorely felt was their bereavement of one whom they fondly hoped might have been spared to them yet many years. The miraculous preservation of the people on his entrance into York had produced amongst them a feeling of the deepest veneration, in addition to their pre-existing affection for him; they could not but feel that a supernatural power was with one whom they looked upon as the divine instrument of so wonderful a deliverance, and as time went on their devotion to him increased. The father to his son, the grandfather to his grandson, would tell the praises of their good archbishop, and thus through the succeeding generation was he already really, though not formally or ecclesiastically, honoured as one who was sharing the company of the Saints at rest. At length in the year 1223, seventy years after his death, his fame had become so great from the miracles[1] which were wrought

[1] Drake's Antiq. of York, bk. ii. ch. ii. p. 481.

at his tomb, that the Dean and Chapter of York petitioned Honorius III., who was then Pope,[1] that he might be canonised and honoured with the rest of the Saints of the Church. Witnesses were sent to Rome to be examined concerning the miracles, and as an instance of the great care which is taken by the Church in the process of canonisation, we may remark that the accounts of the first set of witnesses were not considered sufficient,[2] and the clergy of York were commanded to send fresh witnesses, and to make a second examination concerning the alleged miracles. How very solemn and awful a matter the Church considers the act of canonization to be, will appear from the Bull of Pope Honorius, from which we take the following extract. After a kind of general introduction it runs as follows :[3]—

"Our venerable brother the Archbishop, and our beloved children the Dean and Chapter of York, having petitioned in season and out of season that we should ascribe in the Catalogue of Saints in the Church Militant, William of sacred memory, whom we doubt not is greatly honoured by the Lord in the Church Triumphant,[4] inasmuch as it hath appeared by the testimony of many creditable persons, that so greatly did the grace of his merits

[1] Breviarium Ebor. 1493. In fest Trans. S. Gul. Lectio 1.

[2] Benedict XIV. De Canoniz. lib. ii. ch. 49 ; also Raynaldi contin. ad Baron. an. 1223. Bull. Magn. an. 1222. Ep. 62.

[3] Bullarium Magnum Rom. A.D. 1226.

[4] Drake, bk. ii. ch. i. 419, mentions one Stephen Mauley, Archdeacon of Cleveland, as being instrumental in the canonization, but he is incorrect in the name of the Pope, whom he says was Nicholas, as also does the Rev. Alban Butler.

shine forth, that the Lord vouchsafed to work many miracles through him, and after his decease granted that many more should be wrought through his remains; yet, although we believe the above testimonies, and by no means discredit the truth of his daily increasing celebrity, and would willingly grant the prayer of our petitioners, still, forasmuch as in so sacred and divine a work, we could not proceed without much serious consideration, we have caused a diligent examination to be made several times by appointed persons, both into the life and also into the miracles of the above-named Saint: for although in proof of the existence of sanctity, the perfection of charity is sufficient, yet for its public manifestation the declaration 'exhibitio' of miracles must be required, and this because, some do their good works before men to be seen of them, and because the devil transforming himself into an Angel of light is continually deceiving men. Wherefore when the above-mentioned examiners, having conferred continually with credible witnesses on these points, and having examined them in the appointed manner, did fully, clearly, and faithfully relate unto us the course of this Saint's most holy life, and also the many and great miracles by which the Lord after his decease caused him to be celebrated; we, carefully considering that such a light was not to be hid under a bushel, but to be set upon a candlestick, since besides other miracles (which it would be too long to enumerate severally) his tomb was enriched with abundant oil,[1] with

[1] "Olei ubertate pinguescat."

which many sick were anointed and healed of their infirmities; and also (which we must not pass over in silence), he had raised three persons from the dead, had given sight to five blind, one of whom having been conquered in a single combat, and condemned to lose his sight,[1] came to the tomb of the Saint and called upon him, and earnestly besought that his sight might be restored unto him, of which he knew he had been unjustly deprived—we, in the presence and with the consent of our brethren, and other Prelates who were present at our Council, have ascribed, or rather commanded him to be ascribed in the Catalogue of Holy Confessors, decreeing that his Festival be yearly celebrated on the anniversary of his death.

"Wherefore that ye may prove yourselves grateful for such favour, as is fit, we exhort and warn you all, commanding you seriously by our Apostolic decrees, that ye keep the Festival and memory of this Saint with due veneration, and that ye ask for his prayers in faith to the Lord of Hosts, for yourselves, and other the faithful in Christ. We also, confiding in the grace of God, and in the merits of the above-named Saint, do mercifully grant unto all who shall devoutly assemble on his Festival in the Church of York, a relaxation for fifty days of the penance which may be imposed upon them.

"*Dated at the Lateran, on the* 18*th of March, in the tenth year of our Pontificate,* A.D. 1226."

Thus was St. William, after many trials and great

[1] "In duello devictus et damnatus."

reverses, at length solemnly inscribed in the Church's Calendar: and if it be asked how one, against whom so great a Saint as St. Bernard was opposed as a most determined enemy, was fit to be canonised and honoured by the faithful in Christ, we cannot do better than quote the words of Pope Benedict the fourteenth in answer to this question.[1] Having, in treating of the causes which may stand in the way of a person's reputation of sanctity, brought forward by way of illustration the case of St. William, and having given shortly the account of his deposition and restoration to the See of York, Pope Benedict continues in the following words: "Wherefore, if the above-mentioned letters of St. Bernard could not prevent his (St. William's) canonization, which neither prevented that of the writer, seeing he had favoured that which he considered to be a most righteous cause, deceived by the false insinuation of those, of the truth of whose opinion he had not the slightest doubt: on which account too he did not hesitate to affirm in his letters, that he had sometimes been deceived by the accounts of those in power;—it appears that we may conclude concerning the point in question, that it neither does, nor ought to stand in the way of any person's sanctity, if charges are laid against him by any (however important) writer or historian, so often as these charges shall be removed by a legitimate judge, by a formal sentence, or by that which is equivalent to such a sentence."

And thus we cannot be charged with presumption

[1] De Canoniz. lib. i. cap. 41, sec. 13. "*De his quæ famæ sanctitatis obstare ossunt.*"

if we follow Pope Benedict, and say that as far as regards the charge of simony, or any other great crimes, we must think St. Bernard was misinformed respecting St. William. As to the character of the latter, before his life of penitence at Winchester, we have said already that there were many points in it which were far from being consistent with one who was hereafter to adorn the Church's Calendar: but we may surely believe that whatever was earthly and of base alloy, was purified and cleansed by those contrite and heartfelt tears[1] which he shed as a penitent during his retreat at Winchester, and his history cannot fail to teach us this great lesson, that true penitence is, as it were, a plank to the ship-wrecked soul, to which, if it do but cling in calm and steady faith, it may yet, after much tribulation through many a storm and tempest, reach the haven of the heavenly land, and be permitted to dwell with those whose course had been through life free from the shoals and quicksands of wilful sin.

Our narrative now passes into the year 1283. A custom had prevailed in the Church, even before the time of Constantine (and after him it was much more common), of translating the remains of those whom the Church honoured as saints from the original place in which they had been buried to some more important and conspicuous spot.[2] After

[1] Vid. Bromton.

[2] In Constantine's time the bodies of St. Andrew and St. Timothy were translated. Vid. Carmen xi. Paulini in Nat. S. Felix, Muratori Anecd. tom. 1; also Du Fresne Constant. Christ. lib. iv. ch. 5; also Benedict xiv. De Canoniz. lib. iv. ch. xxii. et seq. "*de Translatione Corporum.*"

the canonisation of St. William, when miracles still continued to be wrought at his tomb, a great desire prevailed from time to time amongst the clergy of York to remove his remains, which at present were buried under a very plain, unsightly tomb, to some more prominent place in the cathedral, and to build over them a shrine[1] which in its costliness and magnificence might in some degree correspond with the celebrity and glory of the saint. It was not, however, until 1283 that this desire was carried into effect. William Wykwane was then Archbishop of York:[2] he had been elected in the summer of 1279, and consecrated on the 19th of September that same year, by Pope Nicholas III., at Rome. He, together with one Antony de Bek, the bishop-elect of Durham, were the chief promoters of the translation, the whole expenses of which were defrayed solely by the latter.[3] Antony was not yet consecrated, and, considering that greater solemnity would be added to his consecration if it could be performed on the same day as the translation, and hoping thereby to connect himself more closely with St. William, it was arranged that both ceremonies should take place on the 9th of January. It was determined that the occasion should be marked by the greatest splen-

[1] This shrine was demolished at the Reformation. Drake, in 1723, examined the spot which tradition said was the place of the saint's grave; for the particulars of this examination, which seems to have been made with more of an antiquarian than devotional spirit, see his 'Antiquities of York," bk. ii. ch. i. p. 420.

[2] Stubbs, p. 1727.

[3] Vid. Brev. Ebor, 1493, Lectiones in Fest. Transl. S. Gul. Ebor. Archiep

dour and magnificence, and, for this purpose, King Edward I. and his Queen Eleanor, together with all the nobility and chief officers, ecclesiastical as well as civil, of the whole of England, were invited to assist at the solemnity. Clergy from all parts were summoned, and eleven bishops were present on the occasion. It was much feared that the king and queen would not be able to attend, partly on account of the severity of the weather, but chiefly because the king and his barons were especially occupied with the settling and disposing of Wales, which country had just been conquered. The king, however, was most anxious to be present, and an accident, which happened to him a short time before his departure for York, increased his anxiety and made him quite determined to go there: "It happened" (we quote the words of the Lection used in the office for the festival of the translation) "it happened that on a certain day he was mounting a steep place, and when he arrived on the summit, he fell down from an immense height, so that it was thought by his attendants, who were naturally amazed at what had happened, that his whole body must have been dashed to pieces. The king, however, rose up immediately, not in the least injured, and gave thanks to Almighty God and St. William, imputing his fall to the enemy of mankind, and his preservation to the merits of the glorious confessor he had determined to honour. From that day so great a desire possessed him to honour St. William, that he set out quickly for York, and hastened in rapid journeys to reach the city."

It was now within two days of the time fixed for the translation, and on the eve of the 8th of January, the Archbishop and Antony de Bek, attended by the dean and canons of the cathedral, entered the church in silence and late at night, to make preparations for the opening of the tomb; having chanted litanies and poured forth many prayers for help and assistance, they prostrated themselves in much humility before the tomb, and after continuing some time in prayer, they commenced their work. Having removed a large stone which was placed upon the coffin, they found the body of the holy bishop habited in the sacred vestments in which he had been buried. These were found to be, both by sight and touch, covered with oil which had exuded from his sacred remains.[1] Removing the patten and chalice which had been placed next to the body in the tomb, the Archbishop and Antony de Bek, with others who were considered from their character fit for so sacred a work, beginning at the head, collected and rolled up the sacred relics with due reverence and devotion, and placed them in a small chest. They then carried it most devoutly on their shoulders to a secret place in the cathedral, which they sealed, and leaving a guard there, they departed in silence. The next morning, when it was quite light, they returned, and unlocked the chest, and having taken out the holy relics, handling them with the most minute reverence, they separated them from the ecclesiastical vestments, which they put by them-

[1] Vid. S. Basil Hom. in S. Julittam Martyrem, t. ii. p. 35; S. Greg. Turon, lib. i. ch. 30; De Gloriâ Martyrum.

selves, but the vestments belonging to the body itself, together with it they placed in a chest prepared with great care for the purpose. This they sealed and guarded. All was now ready for the completion of the translation. Before, however, the hour for the ceremony had arrived, a remarkable event took place, which we will relate in the words of the Lection read on this Festival, and which is the fifth in order.[1] "On the following day, while the matins were being solemnly chanted for the Translation of St. William's remains, in order that the solemnity might be rendered more remarkable, Almighty God magnified His Saint by a wonderful miracle. For as certain of the Canons' servants who had come with their masters into the Cathedral were sleeping in the Choir, one of them had reclined his head on the foot of the pulpit from which the Gospel was wont to be read, and behold, during the reading of the third Lection, one of the columns of no small weight chanced to give way, and fell upon him, so that his head lay pressed down between the fallen pillar and the foot of the pulpit. When those who were present saw it, they ran to raise up the stone, supposing that his head was irremediably shattered. But he rose up, felt no injury, and loosing a band which was tied round his head, he found that it had been pierced through on either side by the upper and the lower stone, and was bitten through as it were with teeth, so that it was the more manifest to all that beheld it, that it was the work of Providence that when the

[1] Brev. Ebor. ubi sup.

band which enclosed his head had been so broken, he himself should have escaped unhurt. The servant gave thanks to Almighty God and St. William for his preservation, believing, and not without reason, that through his merits he had escaped so great a danger."

On the morning of the 9th of January, the cathedral was filled with those who had thronged from all parts to be present at the Festival. The king and queen, and a very large attendance of lords and barons, together with the eleven bishops and their clergy, increased the splendour and magnificence of the scene. The sermon having been preached by the archbishop, the king himself and all the bishops present carried the chest which contained the sacred relics round part of the choir, with the greatest reverence and devotion, and thus the body of William was with great rejoicing and due solemnity translated from an obscure into a lofty place, from the common burying-ground into the choir.[1] As soon as the Office for the Translation was finished, the archbishop solemnly consecrated Antony de Bek Bishop of Durham, and thus ended the solemnities which doubtless for many generations were remembered as some of the most remarkable that had ever taken place in York.

Many miracles took place after the Translation, the most remarkable of which were told to the clergy, and recorded, the account of them forming the remainder of the Lessons read on the Festival of the Translation. This was appointed to be kept

[1] "Ab imo in altum, a communi loco, in Chorum."

yearly on the first Sunday after the Epiphany, St. William's day being celebrated on the 8th of June, the day on which he died. We cannot perhaps close our narrative in a better way than presenting the reader with the Collect which is used on the Festival of the Translation, and which clearly shows the thoughts and spirit which the Church wished should accompany such ceremonies, and which they were intended to produce in the minds of sincere and pious worshippers.

"Almighty and merciful God, who hast shown the body of William, thy glorious Confessor and Bishop, which was buried in the depth of the earth, to be worthy of exaltation; grant that we celebrating his Translation, may be translated from this valley of misery to Thy heavenly kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

APPENDIX I.

On the question of Precedence between the Sees of Canterbury and York.

One of the ancient chroniclers[1] relates that Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury, would not give his consent to St. William's election; but it does not appear whether this was owing to the circumstances of the election, or, which is the most likely, to the old feelings of jealousy, which had for so long a time existed between the two metropolitan sees of England. Though it would be beside our purpose to enter into the respective merits of the two sees, and to determine which was right and which was wrong, yet it may not be uninteresting to the reader to be put in possession of the state of the quarrel, as far as it had proceeded, up to the time of our narrative, which we will now do, having reserved it for a note. The old constitution, ordained by Gregory the Great, in the time of Paulinus, the first Archbishop of York, was, that the two sees should be counted of equal dignity, but that whichever Primate had been consecrated first, should take precedence of the other, preside at councils, &c., and in the case of the death of one, the survivor should consecrate the successor, and in the interim, should exercise all the archiepiscopal functions within the province of the defunct. As instances of this, Honorius, fifth Arch-

[1] Gervasii Act. Pontif. Cantuar. ap. Twysden, p. 1665.

bishop of Canterbury,[1] was consecrated by Paulinus, Archbishop of York; and afterwards Bosa, fourth primate of that see, was consecrated by Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury. This constitution of Pope Gregory continued until the time of the Conquest, but when Lanfranc was appointed to the vacant see of Canterbury by the Conqueror, and Thomas, a canon of Bayeux, to that of York, a contest for the supremacy arose between them, which lasted with unwearied vehemence between several of their successors. Lanfranc demanded of Thomas, as his undoubted and long-established right, profession of obedience. This Thomas would by no means be induced to pay, upon which both Archbishops set out to Rome, to plead each one his cause before the Pontiff. The Pope referred them to a council of all the Bishops and Abbots of England, and upon their return, the subject was first discussed during the Easter Festival, before the king, in the royal chapel at Winchester, and afterwards at Windsor,[2] where, at a council held during Whitsuntide (1072), it was finally determined, in the presence of the Legate of the Apostolic See, the king and queen, and of all the Bishops and Abbots of the kingdom:—

1. That the Church of York ought to be subject to that of Canterbury; and the Archbishop of York to pay obedience to the Archbishop of Canterbury in all things pertaining to Christian religion, as primate of all Britain.

2. That if the Archbishop of Canterbury called a Council wheresoever he pleased, the Archbishop of York with his Suffragans ought to be present, and give obedience to what should be determined.

And 3. That the Archbishop of York ought to make profession of canonical obedience under an oath to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

[1] Stubbs, Act. Pontif. Ebor. ap. Twysden, p. 1687.
[2] Wilkins, Concilia, vol. i. p. 324.

The oath, however, was dispensed with in the case of Thomas, through favour of the king. To the above determinations Thomas submitted, and affixed his signature; it is said that they were carried owing to the king's partiality for Lanfranc, and that Thomas was under great disadvantages in arguing against his opponent, from not having the ancient charters and privileges of the see of York to refer to, for these had been destroyed in a fire just before his promotion to the see. Notwithstanding the decision of the Council of Windsor, the three succeeding Archbishops of York—Gerard, Thomas II., and Thurstan—refused to pay obedience to the Primate of Canterbury; the former two yielded reluctantly after a time, but Thurstan stood out as long as he held the see, and never would consent to pay the required profession; on the contrary, he felt so strongly about the matter, that he went to Rome and pleaded the cause of his see with such success before the Pope, that the Church of York again raised her head to an equality with her sister of Canterbury, and received back her ancient privileges. Honorius II. granted a Bull of exemption to Thurstan [1] and his successors, by which he confirmed to the see of York its ancient dignity, and prohibited the Archbishop of Canterbury from exacting any profession of obedience from the see of York, or York from requiring the like from Canterbury; he also confirmed the constitution of Gregory which we have mentioned above, and decreed that if the Archbishop of Canterbury would not gratis, and without exaction of obedience, consecrate the elect Archbishop of York, that then the said elect should be consecrated by his own Suffragans, or else by the Roman Pontiff himself.

We may here observe that the confirmation of the

[1] Wilkins, ubi sup. p. 407. Eadmer, Hist. Nov. lib. iv. See also Drake's Antiq. of York, bk. ii. ch. i. p. 403, 413–417, and ch. iii.

election of a Bishop, by which is meant the approbation of his nomination, was in the early ages of the Church the right of the Metropolitan and his Suffragans.[1] Afterwards the right of approving and determining whether elections were canonical or not belonged to the Metropolitan only. This continued so for thirteen centuries, and the Decretals of Gregory IX., A.D. 1227, speak of it as the common law of the Church. Afterwards by the reservation of particular cases for the decision of the Apostolic See,[2] the old customs of canonical election were to a certain degree abolished, and the Metropolitan's right of confirming the elections of Bishops was taken away from him and reserved for the Pope:[3] the reason for this being that when the right of nominating and appointing Bishops belonged to the Pope alone, it seemed unfit that this nomination should be confirmed by one who was under his authority. All these alterations were after the time of the foregoing history, yet it seems probable that though not regularly sanctioned by a decree of the Church, new rules and customs were being gradually introduced with respect to the relative authority of the Pope and particular Metropolitans. Whether in the case of William, the Bishop of Winchester used his Legatine authority beyond its just limits, or whether the Archbishop's consent was actually necessary, or how far so, we need not here inquire.

[1] Vid. Concil. Nicen. Can. iv.

[2] Van Espen, vol. i. *De Confirm. Episcop.* Ferrarius, Bibl. Prompt. art. *Confirmatio.*

[3] Thomassin, p. 11, lib. ii. ch. xxix. xxx.

APPENDIX II.

On the Pallium.

It may be interesting to the reader to give a short account of the Pallium, of which we have heard in the foregoing history, and of the privileges annexed to its possession.

The Pallium is a part of the Pontifical dress worn only by the Pope, Archbishops, and Patriarchs.[1] It is a white woollen band of about three fingers' breadth, made round, and worn over the shoulders, crossed in front, with one end of it hanging down over the breast, the other behind; it is ornamented with purple crosses, and fastened by three golden needles, or pins; it is made of the wool of perfectly white sheep, which are yearly on the festival of St. Agnes offered and blessed at the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, in the Church dedicated to her in the Nomentan Way in Rome. The sheep are received by two Canons of the Church of St. John Lateran, who deliver them into the charge of the Subdeacons of the Apostolic College, and they then are kept and fed by them until the time for shearing them arrives. The Palliums are always made of this wool, and when made, they are brought to the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, and are placed upon the Altar over their tomb, on the eve of their Festival, and are there left the whole night, and on the following day are delivered to the Subdeacons, whose office it is to take charge of them. The Pope alone *always* wears the Pallium, and wherever he officiates, to signify his supreme authority over all other particular Churches. Archbishops and Patriarchs receive

[1] Bona de Reb. Liturg. i. 24.

it from him, and cannot wear it except in their own churches, and only on certain great festivals, when they celebrate the Mass. This St. Gregory the Great declares to have been of very ancient origin.[1]

An Archbishop, although he be consecrated as Bishop and have taken possession, cannot, before he has petitioned for and received the Pallium,[2] either call himself Archbishop, or perform such acts as belong to the "Greater Jurisdiction," those, namely, which he exercises not as a Bishop, but as Archbishop, such as to summon a council, or to visit his province, &c., &c. He can, however, when his election has been confirmed, and before he receives the Pallium, depute his functions in the matter of ordaining Bishops to his Suffragans, who may lawfully exercise them by his command. If, however, an Archbishop, before he receives the Pallium, perform those offices which result immediately from the possession of it, such as for instance those relating to orders, and to the Chrism, &c., &c., the acts themselves are valid, but the Archbishop offends against the Canons and Laws of the Church.

The days on which Archbishops and Patriarchs may wear the Pallium are: Nativitas Domini, Fest. St. Joannis, St. Stephani, Circumcisio, Epiphania, Dom. Palmarum, Cœna Domini, Sab. Sanctum, Tres dies Resurrectionis, Ascens. Domini, Tres dies Pentecostes, Fest. S. Joannis Bapt., et omn. Apostolorum, Quatuor Fest. B. M. V., S. Michaelis, Omnium SS., Dies Dedicationis Ecclesiæ, Consecrationis Episcoporum, Ordinationis Clericorum, Dies Anniversarius Ipsius Palliati, atque Festivitates principales suæ Cathedralis Ecclesiæ.

[1] Lib. ii. Ep. 54.

[2] Ferrarius, Bibl. Prompt. in art. *Pallium.*

NOTES.

P. 375. Baronius relates St. William's case at length. His first account is, that St. William was fully guilty of the charges brought against him; and then he retracts, and says nearly the same thing as Pope Benedict, that St. Bernard was mistaken, having been misinformed, &c. Pagi Critica in Baron. is very decided in favour of St. William; and Pope Benedict XIV. says: "Anastasius IV. S. P. in sedem suam Ebor; restituit Willielmum et ad eum Pallium misit, *comperta ejus innocentia* ut Pagius narrat. tom. ii. breviarii Rom. Pontif. in vita prædict. Anast. IV. Luc. II. et Eugenius III." We may here observe that neither Baronius, Pagi, nor Pope Benedict are correct in their details of the history.

P. 410. In the "Annales Wintoniensis Ecclesiæ," auctore Monacho Winton. in Wharton's Anglia Sacra, pars i. p. 300, there is the following notice of St. William's exile, and of his life at Winchester:—

"A.D. 1147. Exulatus est Archiepiscopus Ebor. Willielmus ab Archiepiscopatu suo; Henricus autem Wintoniensis Episcopus propter sanctitatem ejus, et quia eum ordinaverat et consecraverat, honorifice eum in domum suam suscepit cum suis, et necessaria sicut sibi et suis invenit. Ille autem, quantum potuit, et quantum passus est Henricus Episcopus, cum Monachis Wintoniensibus fuit, et illorum sanctitatem tanquam Angelorum dilexit, comedens et bibens cum illis, et in Dormitorio illorum dormiens.

"A.D. 1154. Wms. Archiepiscop. Ebor. pacificatus suis, mediante Episcopo Henrico, cum reversus esset de exilio, veneno extinctus est, ut fertur ab Archidiacono suo, misso veneno in calice suo."

P. 410. The only mention that is made of St. William's penitence is by John of Hexham and Bromton, on whose short account we have ventured to ground and draw out this part of his history.

P. 425. Vid. Benedict XIV. de Canoniz. lib. i. cap. 39. "De differentiis inter Beatificationem et Canonizationem." St. William

probably was honoured as *Beatus* in the Diocese of York, soon after his death. His Canonisation was binding on the whole Church, as Pope Benedict mentions. He says that although the Bulls were made out to special persons, this did not prevent the Canonisation extending through the whole Church.

P. 426. Pope Benedict, lib. ii. cap. 49. "De Testium examine." "Item, quid erit dicendum in hypothesi in qua testes prædicto modo deposuissent, hoc est, modo confuso et non explanato? Erit ne locus repetitioni? Repetitio profecto hæc olim erat in usu. S. P. Honorius III. visa relatione judicum, quibus inquisitionem demandaverat in citata causa Canonizationis S. Gullielmi. Arch. sic eis rescripsit uti legitur apud Raynaldum," ad an. 1224, § 47. "Ut igitur quod in hoc negligenter omissum est, per subsequentem diligentiam emendetur; discretioni vestræ per Apostolica scripta mandamus, quatenus vel dicta testium receptorum sub vestris sigillis per fideles nuntios ad nostram præsentiam, destinetis, vel inquisitionem solemnem iterum facientes, nobis plane ac plenarie, quæ singuli testes deposuerint rescribatis."

P. 427. Pope Benedict XIV. de Canoniz. lib. iv. pars 1, has a long chapter (xxxi.), "De liquoribus aliquando manantibus e Corporibus, Reliquiis, et Sepulcris Sanctorum." He quotes § 19, St. Basil. Hom. in Julittam Martyrem (t. 2, p. 35), "aquam laudibus extollit ex ejus sepulcro manantem;" also St. Greg. Turon. lib. i. cap. 30, "De Gloriâ Martyrum. testatur suo tempore profluvium mannæ salutaris, e sepulcro S. Joanni's Evang. dimanasse. Et eodem lib. cap. 31, narrat mirabile mannæ et olei profluvium e sepulcro S. Andreæ." He goes on, § 20: "De hisce liquoribus actum aliquando est in causis Canonizationum, in causa videlicet, Beati Will. Ebor. in Anglia Archiepiscopi. Vide Bull. Canoniz."

P. 430. The remaining part of St. William's history, including the account of the Translation of his Remains, as also of the miracles consequent upon that event, is taken from the Lections, nine in number, which are in the York Breviary, 1493, and are appointed to be read on the Festival of the Translation. These are given at length in the Acta Sanctorum with this notice:—

"Interim revertor ad S. Willielmi Translationem: quæ quam festive fuerit Eboraci celebrata, docet nos egregius de eâ Sermo ex Anglico Codice Ms Macloviopoli (St. Malo) ad Bollandum transmissus, et pro Officii divini usu in Lectiones novem distributus: sed primis

aliquot lineis mutilus, quarum videtur fuisse sensus: quod hujus S. Willielmi Natalis statim ab ejus morte, judicante populo, et consentiente ordinario (nam de Canonizatione aliqua per Romanum Pontificem nulla uspiam mentio) fuerit in totâ provincia," &c.

In the York Breviary, however, of 1493, which is in the Bodleian, the first Lection begins as follows: "Gloriosus antistes Eboracensis Willielmus postquam a seculo migravit multis ac magnis miraculis coruscavit. Unde ex decreto summi Pontificis et fratrum assensu Catalogo Sanctorum ascriptus est. Dies etiam obitus sui in tota provincia," &c., and at this place the account in the Acta Sanctorum commences; so that the author of the above remark was mistaken in his suggestion as to what was the purport of the beginning of the Lection, as there is distinct mention made of the Canonization.

P. 434. "The table of the miracles which are ascribed to this Saint, which are thirty-six in number, with the indulgence of Pope Nicholas, are yet to be seen in our vestry; but time, and of late years no care, has so obliterated them, that a perfect transcript cannot be had of them."—Drake's Antiq. of York, bk. ii. ch. i. p. 419.

The miracles which are said to have taken place after the Translation, described at length in the Acta SS. Vit. S. Gul. § 42–46, are—the restoration of a child to life who had been drowned, at the shrine of St. William; a Knight Templar cured of lameness; a deformed person cured during a procession of the Saint's relics; and a dumb woman restored to speech during the celebration of the mass, who having seen a vision of St. John of Beverley and St. William, came as a pilgrim to the shrine of the latter, in faith that she should be cured of her infirmity.

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